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RED ACTION

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BATTLE FOR WATERLOO

THE UNTOLD STORY!

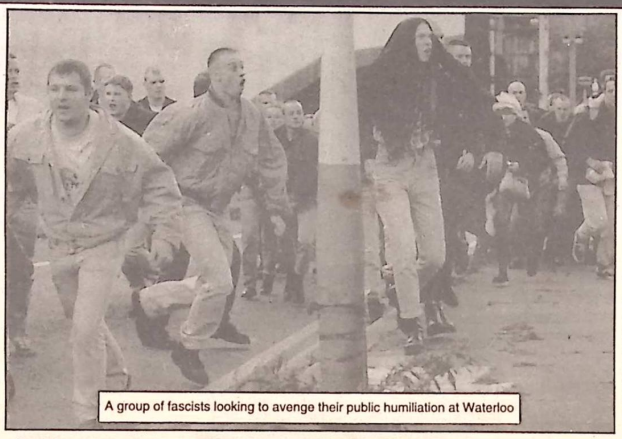
On Saturday 12 September, the far-right in Britain suffered its biggest public humiliation for many years in what has become known as the "Battle of Waterloo".

The neo-nazi music group, Blood and Honour, publicly announced they were holding a gig in London. Additional "muscle" was being suppplied by the British National Party and the British National Socialist Party. Waterloo was chosen as the re-direction point. The gig was sponsored by a mainstream promoter (rumoured to be John Kurd).

"This is brilliant!...it's mad enough to have been organised by Red Action"!

It was designed by the far-right as a show-down, thereafter having cleared the way of any tangible resistance, moves would be made to cash in on Blood and Honour's commercial and political potential. Significantly, despite posters appearing as far as Newcastle and Edinburgh, and reports of publicity distributed in Europe, the anti-racist movement refused to be "provoked".

With less than two weeks to go, the Anti -Nazi League announced they were holding a march - in Thornton Heath! With less than a week to go, Anti-Fascist Action picked up the gauntlet. At a rain-soaked Unity Carnival in Hackney, thousands of anti-fascists were alerted to the significance of the event by live perfomers like The Blaggers and 15,000 distributed leaflets. Between 1,200 and 1,500 people answered the call.



A group of fascists looking to avenge their public humiliation at Waterloo

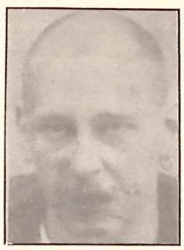
On Thursday 10 September, two days before the gig was due to go ahead, AFA issued a press release in which spokesman, Eamonn Kent, promised maximum disruption. He said: "It will be done peacefully if we are allowed, but we are undaunted by the prospect of physical confrontation and in the end it may well be like the Battle of Waterloo." It was to prove a prophesy of some substance.

'Casual'ties

At the high point of the Battle, no less than five central London stations, including Charing Cross and Waterloo, were closed. In addition, 200 right-wingers, herded by police onto Waterloo Bridge for safety, brought traffic to a standstill for over an hour. There were 44 arrests in total, mainly anti-fascists, with almost as many "casualties", mainly fascists, needing hospital treatment.

A police officer quoted in the News of the World the next day described it as: "Custer's last stand"! An AFA press release on the same day claimed victory: **"Waterloo was a tactical battle between us and the far-right, us and the police. Yesterday we won. Once the police were forced to close the station through weight of numbers we knew we were in control.**

"The Battle for Waterloo was a watershed in the struggle between the forces of the left and the right throughout Europe... It's a battle for control of the streets...The tactics favoured by the Anti-Nazi League and other liberal anti-racist groups have been eclipsed by yesterday's victory."



One of many 'Blood and Honour' casualties on the day

THE INSIDE STORY

When the first sightings of the posters proclaiming "Screwdriver Back in London" were reported five weeks prior to the event, AFA organisers responded to them with scepticism. The principal reason was that Screwdriver had not even attempted to play in London for over three years.

Moreover, they had never previously advertised their gigs publicly.

On the last occassion such a project was mounted on 27 May 1989, their principle pre-occupation was to keep the event hush-hush. It was ticket only with applications to be made by post etc. Twelve hundred tickets were sold throughout Europe in advance.

The promise made by Blood and Honour was, "Money back if not delighted". Due entirely to the efforts of AFA, only 300 got in. Blood and Honour collapsed.

So, justifiably wary of an elaborate hoax, AFA hesitated in calling the counter-demonstration while others in the anti-racist movement did so for less acceptable reasons.

Boasted

On Friday 11 September, Neil Parish, a Blood and Honour organiser, told the media he would be available for interviews on the concourse at Waterloo at 4.30pm. Asked by a reporter from Sky News how they would find him, he boasted they expected between 1,000 and 2,000 so, "You'll have no trouble finding us"! 4.30pm was the time AFA was scheduled to arrive.

At 3.20pm, in a departure from our own agenda, 150 security stewards materialised on the concourse at Waterloo. By 3.25pm the first three "boneheads" had probably resigned themselves to spending the night in casualty. So began the Battle for Waterloo.

Initially taken by surprise, the plod began the ardous task of trying to distinguish the "politically motivated" from the genuine travellers. Huge sweeps across the station herded both anti-fascists and, possibly even more reluctant, fascists towards the exits.

A copper screamed, "If you run, we're fucking running with you"!

Once outside, the fascists were inevitably attacked. When the police rushed out to intervene, they left gaps in the 'thin blue line' through which anti-fascists artfully filtered. This game of cat and mouse continued for an hour.

AFA's objective at this stage was <u>not</u> to seek physical confrontation with the scattered bands of fascists beginning to congregate outside, but to physically occupy the station concourse itself. As long as we "held" the station it would be the natural rallying point for our own forces while automatically rendering it useless as a redirection point for the opposition.

By 5pm there were estimates of

Continued on back page.

EUSTON: AFA'S DOUBLE WHAMMY!

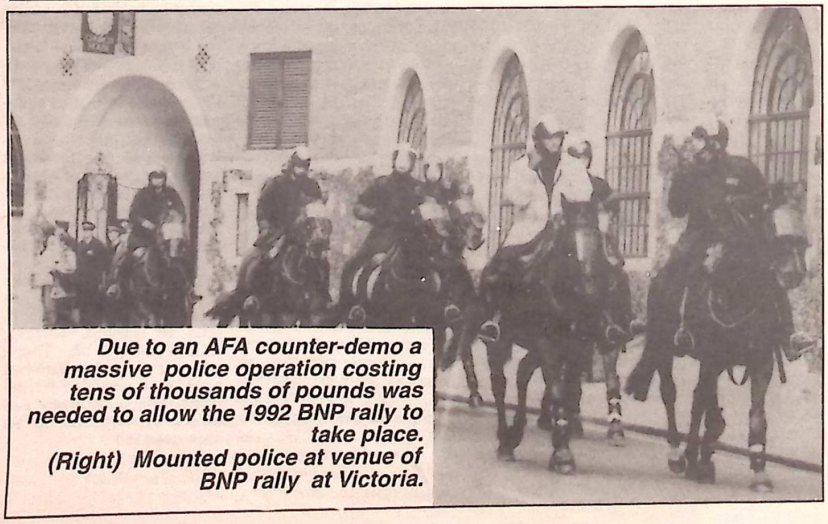
A massive police operation was needed to alow the British National Party to hold their annual rally on London in Saturday October 24th. Members of the Territorial Support Group, backed up by mounted police and aerial surveillance were deployed from 10am at the BNP's re-direction point near Euston (determined to prevent a repeat of Waterloo) Station, and were still on duty eight hours later, protecting the actual venue in Great Smith St, Victoria from attack. The cost of the operation is estimated to run to six figures.

Despite gaining 20% of the vote in a recent by-election, the BNP are clearly frustrated at their inability to break out of their semi-twilight world. Their 1992 rally which had been described in their publications as "the most important event of the year" was for the first time publicly advertised. The expectation was that the numbers attending would thereby increase.

In 1991 the rally was attended by just under 500. Encouraged by the high profile given to their counter-parts in W. Germany, they would have with some confidence expected to add considerably to that number this year.

Anti-Fascist Action called a counter-demonstration at the assembly point an hour before the fascists were invited to assemble, which caused precisely the opposite to happen. Clearly the police were not the only ones to anticipate trouble as less than 300 right-wingers attended. Nor were the right-wingers the only ones to get cold feet. Neither the Anti-Nazi League, or the Anti-Racist Alliance who had both been invited produced any visible presence. This was a repeat performance of Waterloo where ARA reportedly said they did not attend because "AFA could not guarantee our personal safety"!. On the anniversary of its launch many people including its own supporters must now be asking what if any is the legitimate reason for ARA (and indeed the ANL's) existence.

For militant supporters of Anti-Fascist Action on the other hand, the demonstration at Euston began the way the demo at Waterloo had ended with literally hundreds of them imprisoned for hours within police corrals.



Due to an AFA counter-demo a massive police operation costing tens of thousands of pounds was needed to allow the 1992 BNP rally to take place.

(Right) Mounted police at venue of BNP rally at Victoria.

INSIDE

Interview with Republican Pow

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'The Politics of Malcolm X'

.....

Codename: Operation Blackshirt

INSIDE THE MAZE

Red Action interview with Republican prisoner of war

During the August Internment weekend in Belfast, R.A. members visited both male and female Republican prisoners in Long Kesh and Maghaberry jails.

One of them, Bobby Storey, agreed to be interviewed for R.A. and spoke to us about his involvement in the struggle for Liberation and gave an analysis of how he saw the present political situation both inside and outside of the jails.

Bobby has been active in the Republican Movement since the early seventies, and presently serving his sixth term in jail after being repeatedly interned, remanded and finally convicted of politacal 'offences'.

In 1983 he enjoyed a brief taste of freedom when he was one of the 38 Republican POW's who broke out of Long Kesh in the biggest jail break since World War II.

• What was it like for you growing up in Belfast at the time of the present conflict?

I was 13 years of age when the British Army went on the streets of Belfast in 1969. Prior to this I lived in a "mixed" area and encountered no real problems within that environment. I witnessed the pogroms in North Belfast and in particular the bias of the RUC and The Specials who allowed many catholic homes to be destroyed etc. Between 1969 and 1972 we had to move home twice because of this type of loyalist domination.

I joined the Republican Movement in 1972. By this time I had witnessed the aggression of the British Army on our streets. My father and brother were among a large number of nationalists who were arrested and tortured in the Girwood Barracks, one of a number of such "detention" centres.

As an unemployed youth now living in the republican Andersonstown area I was subjected to the almost daily harassment that was very much in practice at that time. I can remember the events in Derry on 30 January 1972 as the British Army murdered 13 unarmed, defenceless marchers on their own streets, and this had such a significant and profound effect on me that I then joined the Republican Movement.

• What was it like being a Republican activist during the period of the 1981 Hunger-Strike?

As one can imagine, the Hunger-Strike period was one filled with emotion. On the outside we were only too aware of the centrality that the prisons had taken in the struggle. Many of those who went on the fast and died were not only comrades but very close friends, therefore there was a great sense of urgency in everything we did. This was reflected in the level of thought that went into the planning and timing of military operations to ensure nothing would detract from the focus on the Hunger-Strike indeed that they should act in a complimentary manner.

The election of Bobby Sands in Fermanagh/South Tyrone highlighted for us the need for a sound political machine to ensure that our struggle could be taken to the widest audience possible.

On a personal level it was a very active period which ensured that I came to realise that for the struggle to be successful we needed more than a strong military machine. The hunger-strikers were a constant source of inspiration because they were very courageous volunteers.

• What were the circumstances surrounding your arrest in 1981?

I was arrested on 20 August, the day Michael Devine died on hunger-strike. There was a riot in the Andersonstown area that morning when his death was announced. The RUC and British Army were using plastic bullets to contain the riot when an IRA ASU on defence duty engaged one of these units. A British soldier was wounded. As the ASU was disengaging, it came upon a large force of RUC personnel who fired upon and rammed their vehicle. They were subsequently forced to stop their car by the RUC and other British Army support units about one mile away from the original engagement. I was arrested in this vehicle, along with two other comrades. I was subsequently "convicted" in a Diplock court and sentenced to 18 years imprisonment for possession of two rifles.

• What was the situation when you entered Long Kesh?

I spent 11 months on remand and therefore when I reached Long Kesh it was in the post-hunger-strike period. I immediately joined my comrades on the "no work" protest (by this time we were wearing our own clothes) who were very much analysing the whole nature of the prison struggle. There was no doubting that the political battle ie. the one over criminalisation had been soundly won by the hunger-strikers. Internally, within the jail the attainment of our clothes allowed us the breadth to assert ourselves to establish prison conditions conducive to our political status as outlined in the hunger-strikers' five demands.

The whole nature and emphasis of struggle took a new departure in the post-Hunger-Strike period. Prior to this it was necessary to openly confront the Prison administration and the British Government in not accepting "criminal status" ie. we were on the blanket. We now knew that open confrontation of the type experienced in the previous five years was not the way forward. The key to securing our objectives (creating the conditions which mirrored our political status) lay in us tackling the system from within.

• Can you describe the 1983 escape and your own alleged role in the escape?

Like all military operations the escape is subject to certain security considerations (as is my own particular role etc). So rather than describe my own role I will give a brief account of events that day. On Sunday 25 September 1983 at 3pm armed volunteers in co-ordinated movement throughout H-Block 7 took over the four wings and the Administration centre and arrested all 27 prison warders - thus securing total control of the area.

As the centre was being taken over, a prison warder attacked a Volunteer. He was challenged and then shot once. He was attended to by a prison Medical Warder who was present in the Block.

Several of our men then donned prison warders' uniforms and commandeered the prison food lorry when it arrived in the Block at 3.20pm.

Thirty-eight Republican POWs then boarded the lorry and the driver was instructed to follow a route to the front gate of the prison as outlined to him by the operational commander.

The Block remained secure with the captured prison warders being held by a rear guard of POWs. After an agreed period this rearguard made good their "escape".

When the lorry reached the main gate complex, a number of volunteers alighted and proceeded to secure this area which included the main tally lodge for the vetting of security passes etc.

In the tally lodge an alarm was raised, so four volunteers were designated to hold this area as the other 34 men went out the main gate in to the surrounding countryside. Despite repeated warnings a number of prison warders tried to stop men from exiting this area and in an ensuing confrontation a prison warder received a number of wounds to the stomach and he subsequently died of a heart attack.

A massive RUC/British army operation went into action and they threw a number of cordons around the prison and surrounding areas. Despite this, 19 men made good their escape.

• How would you describe your relationship with the screws and how was that relationship arrived at?

On a day-to-day basis much of the tension that existed in the 1976-86 period has been removed. This was a conscious decision on our behalf in that once the POA (screws' union) removed itself from actively trying to deny us proper recognition as political prisoners and stop interfering in our struggle with the NIO. Prior to 1983 in particular the POA was a very potent weapon in the NIO push to defeat us internally, they used their potency to demand better pay and conditions etc. Therefore our first task was to neutralise this potent weapon. Once achieved, then the POA refused to become the "cutting edge", it was felt that we could have a similar relationship as what existed in the special category status days ie. non-interference in matters which did not concern them. Of course, we are very mindful that this situation has been impelled upon the POA in this jail - one only has to consider their attitudes and actions in Maghaberry and Belfast [Crumlin Road] to realise that the leopard finds it difficult to remove its spots. Similarly in 1988 when the RPOWs were involved in dialogue with the NIO and the Prison administration to secure better conditions etc. an element within the POA tried to resurrect their political clout. The leader of this clique was well known as one of those who was to the fore at the time of the Blanket period, he was identified and executed by the IRA. The remaining rump within the POA were warned that they would not be permitted to "recapture" their previous position of dominance.

• We understand that you are a "redbook" prisoner. What does this involve?

The "Red Book" was introduced in the aftermath of the escape and it represents an attempt by the prison administration to isolate a certain group of prisoners from their comrades. They sought to achieve this by moving them from wing to wing on a random basis every two to three weeks at a moments notice. They were not permitted to be doubled up in cells with another prisoner, they were moved in separate vans to places like visits, hospital, gym, etc. The NIO liked to portray them as people who could use longer periods in wings to "plot and plan" but of course without ever having to produce evidence to substantiate such claims.

I totally reject that it is a security measure but as outlined above it is an attempt to isolate, to force psychological pressures on me as an individual.

The NIO tacitly accept that the security angle is negated by the whole physical and geographical layout of this jail eg. in British prisons "Red Books" (Cat A) are moved from prison to prison - however this does not stop the constant movement from wing to wing.

• How do you view the formation and position taken by the League of Communist Republicans?

Their formation came about in the aftermath of the movement's decision to end abstentionism in 1986; no doubt a period when a lot of our members found themselves at a political crossroads. The LCR felt that this was proof that the movement was "reformist" and the nature of that reformist tendency could not be corrected from within the movement. They followed the logic of their own analysis and left the movement. I fundamentally disagree with both their analysis and their subsequent course of action. I firmly believe that our policy of abstentionism is the single most significant factor that had retarded our political progression in the 26 Counties and we still suffer from the fallout of that "retarded" analysis to this very day.

• Are you pleased with the "Captive Voice" and how important is it to prisoners?

The stated objective of the Glor Gafa is to provide a forum on which we as prisoners can promote our culture and address the many important political issues in both Ireland and abroad. Therefore it is a very important concept to us. We feel that it has been very successful in that a lot of correspondence has resulted to the editors and to individual contributers. A number of other periodicals have asked for permission to lift some of the articles for publication. One short story is currently being used for a play on RTE. So on this level alone the results have been very pleasing. Politically, it has given us a strong voice to state our thinking on the struggle and other topical matters. Too often in the past people like Fr Faul have been accorded incorrectly as someone who knows how we think and feel, now with the Glor Gafa and the POW department we have that clear voice of our own.

• How do you view the Republican Movement's leadership's position described by some as one of playing down the armed struggle and distancing themselves from the IRA's actions?

In the past number of years the movement, through the Scenario for Peace and Towards a Lasting Peace, has consciously embarked on a strategy to spell out in precise terms what we view as our analysis to how a lasting and meaningful peace can be established in Ireland.

The media and other agencies have deliberately tried to use this to create a situation whereby when Republicans talk about resolving the conflict it is immediately seen in terms of IRA "violence". Thus in essence saying that without IRA actions we would have peace. Our position is that the IRA and resultant armed resistance is but a symptom of the problem and not the cause.

Therefore, because of this ongoing situation where Sinn Fein has consistently articulated that they understand the reason and basis for armed resistance - no longer feel that they must respond to every IRA operation. Of course, the media create an image that this is Sinn Fein distancing themselves from the IRA. However, the actuality is that Sinn Fein are challenging the media and other agencies to accept that armed conflict is a reality and get down to the serious business of resolving it.

• Measures taken by the Government have clearly resulted in the "containment" of the Sinn Fein vote at a stable level. How would you now view the value of the Republican Movement's wholesale involvement in the electoral process?

I view our current electoral strategy as the correct way to complement the armed struggle in creating the circumstances where a British government will allow the Irish people to determine their own future. Our electoral strategy provided the basis to promote our political alternative to that block in Irish self-determination. So all the measures which to a degree have "contained" electoral support (ie measures like identity cards, non-violence pledge, censorship etc) are a reflection of how significant that strategy has been in not only providing that alternative but laying bare that claim that the British are somehow "neutral" in this conflict.

The current British strategy vis-a-vis the Stormont talks is no different from other failed British initiatives in that they exclude Sinn Fein. Republicans would argue that we are excluded because we provide the only realistic and to date untried solution to this conflict ie that the British, by removing themselves politically, allow the Irish people to control their own destiny. So it is in this light that talk of Sinn Fein being "out in the cold" must be viewed. We were "out in the cold" at Sunningdale, Atkins Constitutional Conference and Jim Prior's Rolling Devolution but our message was very precise in that we said that all attempts at an internal solution would flounder as they have and as they will.

• Some people have suggested that given the above points, far from the struggle wearing down the will of the British, it is in fact the Republican Movement that has been worn down and it is the Republican Movement that finds itself devold of a strategy to take the struggle forward. Can you comment?

There can be no doubting that there are periods when the British have created breathing spaces for their political strategies to appear as if they have a chance of securing a settlement. They all have been short lived and whereas not singly down to Republican resistance, they are down to the irreformable nature of the Six County state.

We are conscious that the task of Republicans is not simply to thwart British attempts to stabilise the situation but to seek methods to speed up the process of their withdrawal. So, far from the British wearing down Republicans, we have shown that our analysis won't go away and all the attempts by Britain just highlight how much they wish to remain here.

• How do you view the upsurge in Loyalist violence?

Throughout the history of the Six County state, Loyalists have always felt that if the status quo was in any way threatened then all they had to do was respond with violence against the nationalist population - after all that was the basis on which the state was founded. In recent times every time the "union" even looked remotely under scrutiny they have reacted by assassinations. Of course, many loyalist murder squads have been under the direct control of the British Security Services and this allowed them another avenue to repeal nationalist resistance and at the same time appearing to be the referee in an "intractable" conflict.

• With the break up of Eastern Europe what are the prospects for socialism?

Unfortunately, the whole media portrayal has allowed the important developments to remain ignored. Initially, many of those states were never permitted to decide their own destinies and became part of a power bloc and in essence part of the power politics involved between East and West. The conditions in those countries now will permit the contradictions of capitalism to emerge and permit socialism to become a realistic alternative rather than an imposed one as it was seen to be in the past. I view the prospects for socialism to be sound, certainly it is not an easy path which lies before us but as we have found here, struggle cannot be measured in weeks, months. However, if your objective is based on sound fundamental principles then by proper application of the resultant strategy, the resolution of the problem can be achieved.

Bo raibh agat-sa

We would like to thank Bobby for giving his time to be interviewed, and wish him and his comreades well.

As he would be first to point out, his story and present situation, are far from being unique amongst Republican activists and that there are presently over 700 Pow's in jails in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the US. These prisoners and their families have to be provided for; all donations, enquiries and offers of help should be addressed to :

Green Cross
51/55 Falls Road,
Belfast 12.

The plot to criminalise Anti-Fascist Action

Codename... 'OPERATION BLACKSHIRT'

AT 2pm on Thursday 23 July, with less than half the prosecution witnesses heard, the case against Gerry Gable and Gary O'Shea had collapsed. Both the editor of Searchlight and the Anti-Fascist Action supporter had faced charges of violent disorder.

The charges resulted from a meeting planned by the League of St George to take place at Kensington Town Hall on 25 May 1991. These plans were disrupted with the arrival of between 70 and 100 anti-fascists at the venue. Subsequent violence between the factions led to 17 arrests, all anti-fascists. All were initially released without charge. A number of right-wingers were hospitalised.

Some four weeks later, proceedings took the bizarre turn that was to be the hallmark of the case. Of the 17 arrested, it was announced that only one - the defendant O'Shea - was to be charged under three counts: assaulting a police officer, two charges of theft and conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm with persons unknown!

The only inference to be drawn from the police case as it was presented was that O'Shea had conspired with others, that is persons other than the 16 anti-fascists with whom he had been arrested!

Ten weeks after the Kensington meeting, Gerry Gable, who had not been one of those arrested on the day and who had issued a press release published in the Sunday Telegraph giving his account of events, was charged with Incitement to Violence. He was not charged with conspiracy.

During the following months the co-accused stood side-by-side in the dock of various magistrates courts. The state prosecutors, without having produced a single item of evidence to justify a relationship of "common purpose" between them on the day, claimed that the interaction between them was that of a "General and his Field Commander". There was also reference on occasion to the existence of a "battle-plan".

It took the state six months to come to terms with the dilemma they faced as a result of this discrepancy. Either they could synchronise the charges by charging Gable with conspiracy as well, or drop the conspiracy charges against O'Shea. They did the latter, as well as dropping the incitement to violence charge against Gable. The substitute charge of violent disorder was used instead.

On the opening day of the trial at Southwark Crown Court, the by now familiar blend of malice and laughable incompetence which had dogged the proceedings throughout was given tangible form. It first materialised in the shape of Mr James Keogh, a chief prosecution witness. A large man, over six feet tall, in his late 40s, he had a military air about him as he bustled purposefully outside the court.

He attracted curious glances as a result of wearing a white "Casablanca" type mac, several sizes too small. In addition, it was so tightly belted natural movement was restricted. The impression created was of some type of foundation garment, or corset, being worn over a suit.

At 10.15 am he made his move. He threw open the door of the court and declared to the clerk that he was "counsel for O'Shea"! When it was pointed out to him that the defendant already had a barrister, he protested until he was led away by an usher who conversed with him in low and reassuring tones.

The behaviour of Mark Taha, another prosecution witness, was only slightly less bizarre. Particularly seedy, he haunted the corridors of the court trailing a plastic bag or gibbered incessantly to himself in the canteen.

The principle witness for the prosecution was Keith Thompson. It was he who had organised what he described as a "symposium" on 25 May. In all, he spent - served might be more accurate - a full eight and a half hours in the witness box. Seven of those under cross-examination. By the end of his testimony, both his and the integrity of the prosecution's case were in tatters.

The behaviour of Mark Taha, another prosecution witness, was only slightly less bizarre. Particularly seedy, he haunted the corridors of the court trailing a plastic bag or gibbered incessantly to himself in the canteen.

Even the relatively simple matter of swearing on oath landed him in trouble. He swore on the bible but was forced to admit that he had once been an Odinist. He insisted that this was no longer the case. The defence responded with the inquiry: "Tell us Mr Thompson, when did Valhalla cease to play an important part in your life?"

The court erupted. To the visible astonishment of the jury, he admitted that he would have been, if he been unemployed in Germany in the 1930s, a national socialist. He denied the existence of the holocaust and the gas chambers; insisted that the murder of millions was simply a matter of philosophy; maintained that he was not of the far right, but preferred to think of himself as "hard centre"!

Confronted with the fact that one of his invited speakers, the BNP's Tony Lecomber, was known as the "Mad Bomber" following an unsuccessful attempt to blow-up a left-wing organisation's HQ, Thompson replied "I heard he had some trouble with a firecracker"! He insisted at one stage that after witnessing a personal friend "being nearly beaten to death ... by this terror gang" his first reaction was that "the show must go on"! Unsurprisingly, the defence attacked the rest of his contradictory evidence with some relish. He also became the butt of the Judge's sarcastic asides.

By 4.20pm on Tuesday , having been the object of the most gruelling cross-examination for over seven hours, he stumbled from the witness box looking physically and emotionally exhausted. Just before he stepped down, he was challenged to explain yet another contradiction in his evidence. He attempted to acknowledge the error but instead stuttered, "It was a mistake," a confession for which there appeared to be only unanimous agreement.

After the Thompson fiasco, the next couple of witnesses were humble and careful to the point of being inhibited. Initially, Brian White, who had taken a bit of kicking during the exchanges in Kensington, looked promising. He introduced himself as an "Executive Chef". The Judge asked him to repeat his occupation. "Chef, sir," replied White. "You mean cook?" inquired the Judge, "I thought you said chief!"

At the cost of surviving the cross-examination relatively unscathed, neither he nor Harrison added anything to strengthen the case for the defence - or even the prosecution.

Stephen Vallance, who was in charge of security on the day and probably felt he had something to prove, wasn't going to be intimidated. He ad libbed outrageously, with little regard for his previous statement to police, the latter in any event being only on a nodding acquaintance with reality.

Gable's barrister, who had clearly enjoyed himself up to this, seemed to slaver in anticipation. The expected opportunity to cross-examine however was to be denied.

Vallance, perhaps sensing the need to make up for lost ground, blundered badly.

In his statement to police 14 months earlier, he had told them that after Gable's speech another man addressed the crowd. According to his statement, this individual had said "On behalf of Red, another word I didn't hear, thank you all for taking part. We will be leaving shortly."

In court he affixed the word "Action" to the word "Red". It was to prove to be the case of an ad-lib too far.

Up to that point, the prosecution had maintained that Gable was singularly responsible for everything that happened; that he, in the words of Thompson, was "running the show".

The Judge pounced. "If what you say is true, then this man represented a source of authority other than Gable. If so, could it not have been the case that Gable led the journalists in first and perhaps Red Action led the mob in later?"

It was at this juncture that the charge against Gable was thrown out. When the court resumed, the prosecutor also announced that the charges of violent disorder, police assault and theft were being dropped against O'Shea. With regard to the alleged assault, he conceded that the PC had reported no injury at the time. The theft of the flag was, "only a technical matter ... akin to winning the enemy colours and had only been used to tie him into the case."

It was on this remarkably candid admission that the case for the prosecution ended in anti-climax. Both defendants were acquitted and awarded costs.

In ordinary criminal cases, the Crown Prosecution Service only pursues a prosecution if they consider there is at least 51 per cent chance of conviction. What was remarkable about this trial was that Gable was acquitted without even presenting his defence and O'Shea without even being mentioned!

In the absence of tangible evidence, the CPS's decision relied on conjecture and the calibre of the civilian witnesses and their depositions - all, save the caretaker, self-confessed fascists and bitter political enemies of the accused. From that rationale, the feasibility of the project could have been championed by the CPS only if they accepted the integrity of Thompson, Valance and possibly the sanity of Taha and Keogh was beyond question. So, either it was a remarkable blunder or somebody pushed ahead despite the evidence rather than because of it.

While there were never any grounds to show that the accused conspired together with persons unknown, it is not implausible to suggest they might have been conspired against - by persons unknown.

Undoubtedly, the collapse of the prosecution case against the two anti-fascists at Southwark Crown Court was a victory not only for the accused who, had they been found guilty, would certainly have been jailed, but it was also a victory for the anti-fascist movement as a whole.

While naturally the aftermath was a time for celebration, there was also good cause for evaluation and sober reflection. The result apart, for many activists the conduct of the case was merely further confirmation of the existence of an on-going campaign to criminalise Anti-Fascist Action and its supporters.

The Judge pounced. "If what you say is true, then this man represented a source of authority other than Gable. If so, could it not have been the case that Gable led the journalists in first and perhaps Red Action led the mob in later?"

Throughout the trial at Southwark, Detective Chief Inspector Parsons, who was in charge of the case from the beginning, was seen to browse through a substantial file marked, "Operation Blackshirt". It can be assumed that the contents, which included video cassettes, were not directly related to the case in hand but were collated by persons other than DCI Parsons, probably over a considerable period of time.

The overt as opposed to covert interest in, and intimidation of, AFA members can be traced back to the successful campaign to "Shut Down Cut Down" and other neo-Nazi outlets in and around Carnaby Street in the Spring of 1989. What may have excited the interest of the Special Branch was that the campaign enjoyed the active support of a number of Labour councillors, tenants' associations, nursing and student unions. It was also executed with a ruthlessness and ambition that had not hitherto been evident. The result being that Blood and Honour which had run a thriving business worth tens of thousands of pounds annually was crippled politically and financially within six months.

In November of the same year, AFA announced that its annual counter-demonstration against the NF on Remembrance Day would take place in Victoria an hour before the fascists were due to assemble. As a compliment to this tactic, 100 stewards decided to secure the pubs normally used by the NF as well. Instead of being confronted by teams of "Fronters" wielding blades they were greeted by four teams of Special Branch armed with video cameras! One video team brazenly recorded every waking moment of the chief steward on the day - about a three hour video. The intention was to let him know he was a "marked man now".

On subsequent occasions, other individuals have been similarly targeted. The implicit threat conveyed by such State aggression has not proved idle. Red Action personnel have suffered disproportionately in this regard.

On Monday 18 September 1990, three AFA members were found guilty of Grievous Bodily Harm and Violent Disorder at Wood Green Crown Court. This resulted from a fracas after a Bloody Sunday march the same year. The alleged "victim" of the assault who had been involved in right-wing violence since the early 1980s spent precisely one minute in hospital. The anti-fascists received a total of eleven years. Two are still in prison. It was a sentence designed to intimidate.

On 5 October , less than three weeks later, four other members of Anti-Fascist Action, were charged with Affray. This resulted from an attack by the BNP in full view and with the prior knowledge of the police. Though the incident never amounted to anything more than "handbags at five paces" there were a number of bail restrictions and it took 18 months to come to court. When it did, on 2 March 1992, the prosecution blandly offered no evidence.

Approximately four weeks later, two leading AFA activists involved in the Northern Network were arrested on a trivial matter within minutes of arriving in Rochdale from Manchester. It was 7pm on a Friday night, the evening of a planned BNP march through the town. They were joint chief stewards for the counter-demonstration. They were held for 24 hours and, while in custody, their flats raided.

Agent Provocateurs are liberally employed to provoke and confuse. To provoke with a view to entrapment, or else to instigate some action with the purpose of causing confusion.

On 25 May, AFA's Glasgow organiser had his home burgled. Computer equipment and a photocopier were stolen. Investigating police found no finger prints. Five days later on 30 May, police officers from the same police station arrested him and told him he was being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. His solicitor secured his

release within hours. No charges.
In this two month interim, following his acquittal on Affray, one of the "Brick Lane Four" was rearrested along with one on AFA's previous arrestees in Rochdale. They were jointly charged with Grievous Bodily Harm. Four months later, the charges were dropped without explanation.
The use of these recent sample illustrations is not offered as proof that "Operation Blackshirt" exists. Since AFA was relaunched by Red Action in London in 1989, incidents such as those described have become almost routine. As can be seen, the operations vary from the very basic to the dangerously sophisticated.
Agent Provocateurs are liberally employed to provoke and confuse. To provoke with a view to entrapment, or else to instigate some action with the purpose of causing confusion. On some occasions there has been barely concealed collusion between fascist gangs and uniformed police; at other times they have been instructed to adopt a neutral stance before and even after serious confrontations.
From time to time they have organised "Sting" like operations, with anti-fascists being "fed" information. Through being able to guarantee an anti-fascist response to some fascist initiative, they could then, with some confidence, anticipate and so properly monitor, the inevitable confrontation they themselves had engineered. The point that must be driven home is that not only does the State "operate" but that, as these *few examples show, a recognisable* pattern of behaviour exists. Even if the tactics vary, the objective of this harassment appears fixed. It is to:
• Isolate and criminalise Anti-Fascist Action;
• Discover and neutralise the militants within it;
• Through the use of selective arrests, blunt the "cutting edge" and intimidate the periphery;
• They may in turn also find it convenient to bolster the reputation of a "moderate" or bogus rival.
Though very obviously only a junior version of the "Big Boys' Games" played out between other sections of the security forces and Republicans in places like West Belfast and South Armagh, it is STILL a level of intrigue and harassment with which the "revolutionary" left in this country is not overfamiliar.
Other sections of the working class, indeed sometimes whole communities, who at different times were forced to stand up for themselves were all in turn deemed to be subversive: the Birmingham Six; Winston Silcott; miners at Orgreave etc. Many of the conspiracy trials which resulted from these uprisings bore the familiar hall-marks of political interference ie, vindictiveness, chicanery and cynicism.
The philosophy/formula which governs the behaviour of every modern, stable bourgeois state is its ability to respond to economic cycles of boom and slump by making sure that the political form of rule adopted is in tune and compatible with the economic reality. This is capitalism's traditional safeguard. During times of economic crisis, the ruling class often finds it difficult to govern by consent through the favoured organs of its domination - parliamentary democracy.

The philosophy/formula which governs the behaviour of every modern, stable bourgeois state is its ability to respond to economic cycles of boom and slump by making sure that the political form of rule adopted is in tune and compatible with the economic reality.

Reactionary arguments which manifest themselves in the activities of right-wing terror groups serve as either the impetus or the pretext which drives the bourgeois state to a suitably reactionary posture. Consequently, effective anti-fascism will inevitably in turn be regarded as subversive if and when it threatens to deny to the ruling class the opportunity to exercise this option.

In its continuing flight from reality, the liberal left doggedly insists that militant anti-fascism, which in its purest form is spelt out in physical violence, is merely a cowardly distraction, a side show, from the real business of confronting racist legislation by the state.
The motive behind this line of argument is as obvious as it is perverse. If nothing else, the current events in Germany show that institutionalised racism is not the cause of far-right violence. The relationship is precisely the reverse. The well-organised attacks against refugees at Rostock and elsewhere were the spark which set in motion the manoeuvres by the social democratic parliamentarians to support right-wing calls to amend Germany's "liberal" post-war constitution.
The success of the fascist strategy causes these forms of direct actions to be "legitimised" in the eyes of the public. This in turn emboldens fascist supporters towards more ambitious political demands, inevitably followed by further paramilitary excesses.
Throughout Europe, the left has a political investment in pretending the opposite is the reality.
With an easy conscience, they can then turn their backs on or even denounce the militant minority for "being as bad as the fascists". In this year's Newham Monitoring Project's annual report, AFA is condemned for the use "of intensely paranoid almost paramilitary tactics". To follow this line of argument is to accept that not only is confronting the fascists an alternative to confronting the state, but in addition it is to pretend that in the battle for the streets the state remains neutral. This is precisely the argument the state itself uses.
Understandably from the point of view of a grant-maintained institution, nothing can be supported which engenders the wrath of the political establishment (More than my job's worth). But in rejecting physical confrontation they also eschew any long-term goals or short-term political solutions that genuinely reflect the interests of the working class - black and white - as an adulteration of the anti-racist struggle.
Instead, they insist the anti-fascist movement should devote its whole strength and energy to those middle class patch-work reforms which could provide the political establishment with new supports and hence perhaps transform potential catastrophe into a gradual, piecemeal and hopefully peaceful process of dissolution.
As a result of being state-appointed and highly paid representatives of the "black community" part of the job descriptions of these groups are that they be highly vocal. Their most energetic propaganda is conducted within, or is directed at the political establishment or its agencies: "The Government must do this; the police must do that"; postcards to John Major; lobbies of the council; calling for state bans etc.
All disapproval is, of necessity, channelled within; what is defined by their pay masters as respectable limits.
Groups like the Newham Monitoring Project follow this strategy because they are paid to; "revolutionary" groups like the Socialist Workers Party or the Revolutionary Communist Party follow a similar strategy from choice.
Rather than concern themselves with resolving the practical problems faced by the working class, their reason for being is to suggest abstract solutions to the problems faced by the state. For once you accept the state is the cause of the problem, it is logical to deduce that the state can, indeed must, provide the solution. So while the objective of the hard right is to strengthen the state through the use of force, the parallel function of the soft left is to strengthen the state through the use of reform. The purpose of the mission is an attempt to save the state from itself. Adding to he attraction of approaching the issue arse about face is the promise that 'one's' relationship with anti-fascism remains purely platonic.
It is Karl Marx who provides the most penetrating analysis of this element whose standard approach to any problem is now clearly the predominant one among the left in Europe: "These are the people who, under the guise of unflagging activity, not only do nothing but also try to prevent anything happening at all - except chatter; the same whose fear of every action in 1848 and 1849 obstructed the movement at every step and finally caused its downfall; the same people who never see reaction and are then quite amazed to find themselves in a blind alley, where neither resistance or flight is possible."
For members of the Anti - "Nasty" League who monotonously and literally find themselves in this dilemma the rallying cry is "violence must be the last resort .. we mustn't sink to their level"!! With equal vehemence, they abhor both the prospect of ending up in the dock and the politics that might cause this to happen.
So from their outlook, when they say: "Anti-Fascist Action does more harm than good", it is not only their unique and, perhaps unwitting, contribution to the strategy of the state, it is also a sentiment sincerely expressed.

TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT THAT IS ...

"The policy of the united front has as its task to separate those who want to fight from those who do not"

The British neo-nazi movement will be forced to ask itself some very searching questions certain to be slung by its various sections at each other. The hardest questions naturally arise from defeat. Yet the success of the anti-fascist alliance also presents its own agenda. It is apparent that the attempt to organise a decisive "public" confrontation brought about an unholy alliance of all the principle neo-nazi forces: Blood and Honour were underwritten by elements of the BNP and the NF as well as whatever is left of the British Movement. Alarmingly, the same cannot be said of the anti-fascist forces.
Everyone knew that the Screwdriver gig of 12 September was the most open challenge by the fascists for control of the streets and consequently to the resolve of the anti-fascist movement to be staged in years. What was the response of the publicity-hungry outfits of ARA, the ANL Mark II and the rest? They refused to even acknowledge that anything was happening! The fascists' plans for a major London event and known for weeks in advance were calmly shunted into the realms of the great unmentionable. In their issue of 5 September, the SWP paper does call for a march and rally on 12 September - **in Thornton Heath**! This tactic was an exact replay of the SWP's attitude at Thamesmead in May last year when they marched away from the BNP to the only area the police had guaranteed would be closed to the fascists. Militant's own front, the so-called "Youth Against Racism in Europe" (aka "Youth Against Racism and Fascism") launched some months ago following the success of the AFA march through Bethnal Green, appears to have sunk without trace except as the organisers of a day trip to Belgium. The Militant paper at least gave space to a letter from an AFA branch in Kent (reputedly Militant controlled) calling for mobilisation: even if it was tucked away beneath articles calling for an away day to Brussels in five weeks time. Militant's prediction at the time of launching "YARF" that anti-fascist activists would follow the group most qualified to lead has proved uncannily accurate. Even in their own paper it was left to a member of AFA to call for mobilisation against the immediate threat of nazi control of the streets!
Both Militant and the SWP claim to be Trotskyist organisations. Red Action has already pointed out (edition 62) that their tactics do not correspond to those insisted upon by Trotsky himself in the period 1930-33 against the rise of the Nazis. RA has also pointed out that in practice these allegedly"trotskyist" organisations have adopted the passive and damaging tactics of the stalinist KPD (German Communist Party). Yet there is one overall strategy which Trotsky insisted upon above all others - the united front. Both Militant and the SWP have preached the necessity of anti-fascist unity while simultaneously setting up their own front organisations which then operate autonomously and even antagonistically in relation to existing anti-fascist forces. Communication, let alone collaboration, between the various anti-fascist "fronts" is virtually non-existent. The situation is that, in Trotsky's words: "only a purely formal, declamatory application to the policy of the united front was inaugurated, whereas by its very nature, it can prove fruitful only on the basis of a realistic appraisal of the situation."
AFA has been operating for a number of years according to a strict policy of **ideological and physical confrontation**. In a number of different areas, AFA has succeeded in defining its policy in the most effective way possible - in unambiguous practical initiatives. The Unity Carnivals, the march through Bethnal Green, leaflettings of problem areas, educational work, series of anti-fascist gigs, successful confrontations with fascists at a wide variety of venues, comprise a series of statements made in the most open and effective language of all: the language of action and practice.
It is vitally important to be clear that AFA's policy of physical confrontation (always accompanied by propaganda work) is a **response to fascist brutality:** the essential function of a fascist movement within capitalism, its A to Z of strategy, **is the suppression of independent working class organisation through physical force and intimidation**. The Confederation of Conservative Students, for example, may consist of repulsive political reptiles, but it does not represent this kind of threat to working people: physical confrontation therefore would not be a necessary instrument of policy in con-

fronting it as it is in the case of the fascists. Nor is "physical confrontation" just a policy voted for in meetings or which makes a ritual appearance in leaflets. AFA has achieved many successes against the fascists of which Waterloo was the culmination to date.

It is sometimes said (still!) that AFA consists only of boot-boys and streetfighters. Once again it may be necessary to say there are a limitless number of roles within AFA that have been and continue to be played by "non-combatants". Acceptance of the **principles** of ideological and physical confrontation has always been the only qualification for membership. AFA consists principally of an alliance of Red Action, DAM and Workers Power, alongside unaligned individuals. None of these groups has much in common except the desire to unite effective opposition to the rise of the fascists. These forces have therefore come together in a "practical agreement" in Trotsky's phrase, without any redundant theoretical baggage, to operate a common policy in ac-tion. This is precisely what Trotsky spelt out in his insistence on the necessity of a socialist united front. Why then, do the SWP and Militant for example - both of them notoriously Trotskyite organisations - stand aside from all attempts to implement the united front in practice? Why is it that they insist anti-fascist activity must be organised through the single "one true church"? Why do they insist that their **own** organisations must lead a **one party** anti-fascist front? According to Trotsky, what are the conditions that demand the *formation of the united front*?

"The progress of a class towards class consciousness...is a complex and contradictory process. The class itself is not homogeneous. It's different sections arrive at class consciousness by different paths and at different times...Within the proletariat several parties are active at the same time.Therefore...it remains split politically. The problem of the united front - which arises during certain periods most sharply - originates therein."

Conversely, the attitude of the German Communist Party, the KPD, during the rise of Hitler, was that the working class was duty bound to follow its lead to the exclusion of all other class forces.

Trotsky describes how the stalinist KPD argued: "Every united front that doesn't first place itself under the leadership of the communist party...is directed against the interests of the proletariat. Whoever doesn't recognise the leadership of the communist party is himself a 'counter-revolutionary'...From the identity in principle of the aims of the party and the class, the functionary deduces his right to lay down to the class. The very historical problem which the communist party is yet to solve - that of uniting the overwhelming majority of the workers under its banner - is turned by the party into an ultimatum, into a pistol which he holds against the temple of the working class."

This, in practice if not in declared intention, is precisely the policy of the Trotskyists today - which Trotsky himself unconditionally condemns. The SWP and Militant will 'fight' fascism, but only within the confines of their own front organisations - and incidentally, to facilitate recruitment. Both Militant and the SWP say the class should unite against the fascist threat - a threat which until very recently they refused to recognise, by the way - but insist the unification must be "under its own banner". This blatant sectarianism is carried through to extraordinary lengths. While reports from all sections of the bourgeoise press record that the Waterloo rout was organised by the "Anti-Fascist Action group", in its report (19 September) the SWP paper baldly announces that 750 anti-fascists "**turned up**"! No mention of AFA. Similarly, the Militant paper accomplishes the feat of reporting the Waterloo events with **no mention of AFA**. As a matter of fact, there would have been no turnout at all without the extensive campaigning mounted by AFA groups beforehand - including the Unity Carnival of the week before - yet the SWP and Militant airbrush AFA out of the picture. AFA, the organiser of the whole shebang, is a 'non-person'. Readers are perhaps intended to assume it was by an uncommon stroke of luck they all happened to "turn-up" at the same time on the right day!

There is no question of **burying** 'party differences' and sectional interests within an anti-fascist united front. One of its principal conditions is: "The practical programme of the united front is determined by agreements with organisations made in full view of the masses. Every organisation remains under its own banner and its own leadership. Every organisation obeys in action the discipline of the united front."

The united front does not in any way oblige its members to instigate some sort of theoretical truce in respect of its partners: "No combining whatever of programmes or banners. No unprincipled deals. Complete freedom of criticism of temporary allies."

Despite isolated attempts by certain sub-groups within AFA to subvert these conditions (the obscure RIL sect in particular has covered itself with glory in this respect), these are the essential principles underlying AFA's structure and practical programme. **This 'programme' consists simply and solely in the direct ideological and physical confrontation with the forces of fascism: this is the entire content of the "practical agreement" which is the basis of the united anti-fascist front and its clarity must not be prejudiced by dilution or compromise.**

Despite the necessity of rejecting unprincipled or reformist compromises, the net cast by such a united front structure is a wide one. Trotsky himself gives the example of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Tsarist Russia. The anti-semitic pogroms of the proto-fascist "Black Hundred" groups were aimed principally at the Jewish poor - yet also enveloped the Jewish bourgeoisie: "due to the danger hanging over their heads, the Jewish liberal bourgeoisie...collected considerable sums for the arming of revolutionary workers and students. In this manner a **temporary practical agreement** was arrived at between the most revolutionary workers, who were prepared to fight guns in hand, and the most frightened groups of the bourgeoisie..."

Trotsky unashamedly adds, "in the struggle against fascism the Communists were duty bound to come to a practical agreement with the devil and his grandmother..."

The necessity of such alliances, **always based upon the undiluted principle of ideological and physical confrontation of the fascist forces,** is the best measure of the danger that fascism represents towards the entire proletarian movement. It is founded on the recognition that fascism, **which fights for the total destruction of all independent organisations of the working class,** is a qualitatively different threat than that constituted by the bourgeois state. Consequently: "**The policy of the united front has as its task to separate those who want to fight from those who do not; to push forward those who vacillate; finally to compromise the capitulationist leaders in the eyes of the workers in order to consolidate the fighting capacity of the latter.**"

Trotsky goes on to describe how the majority of workers do not trust the leadership of the existing Communist Party and remain uninvolved or within 'moderate' political organisations. One of the principle factors in perpetuating this lack of revolutionary commitment is the absence of the focused leadership of activists united around a common practical purpose. He goes on: "But [the workers] do want to fight against fascism even now. Were they shown the first step to take in a common struggle, they would insist upon their organisation taking that step. If their organisation balked, they might reach the point of breaking with them."

Obviously, the formation of a united anti-fascist front is a prerequisite for forming any such 'pole of attraction' for uncommitted or unconvinced elements within the class. The rejection of the policies of the united front Trotsky describes as "stubborn, stupid and insensate". The 'moderate' organisations, says Trotsky, are enabled to, "disguise their dread of fighting, their inability to fight, by citing the aversion of the Communist Party to participation in a common struggle."

The contemporary political landscape as it refers to the left is quite unlike that analysed by Trotsky, in the sense that there is no mass party of the working class such as the KPD to organise around. But this can only mean, given the fragmentation of contemporary left forces, that the necessity of a united front consisting of all principled working class elements is **even greater than before, not less.**

AFA has now decisively taken the stand that Trotsky accused the KPD and the 'moderate' workers' parties of being afraid to take. After the 'Battle of Waterloo' it is absolutely clear that the excuse of there being no organ of common struggle is no longer available. It is AFA that has succeeded in uniting diverse anti-fascist elements into a single practical programme. It is AFA that, through implementing the principles of the united front in the "common struggle", seeks to enforce the polarisation of those who fully accept the implications of a policy of confrontation with fascism from those for whom 'confrontation' is a matter for politically correct resolutions or CND type 'protests'. It is AFA that has now succeeded in exposing the "dread of fighting" of the "capitulationist leaders" in the conservative left groups, precisely "in order to consolidate the fighting capacity of the workers". In the simplest terms, it is AFA's task, as Trostky's blunt formula has it, to "**separate those who want to fight from those who do not.**"

On the other hand, it is now revealed with the greatest clarity that it is the purpose of ARA, YRE, the ANL etc, to offer the prospect of shelter for all those belonging to the conservative and petty bourgeoise left, the 'bureaucrats' of the socialist movement, who wish to strut their revolutionary capers from the safety of uninvolved propaganda machines. In this way, the leaders of the conservative left attempt to disguise their "dread of fighting" by the creation of diversionary front organisations which talk tough("smash the fascists", "police protect the fascists" and all other chants that emanate from behind police barriers) but which in practice serve only as a mask for passivity and reformism. As a mask for passive paper sales which don't disturb the nazi paper sales down the street, a mask for passive marches in safe areas or under police protection, and for the passive CND-style 'protest' syndrome that locates itself behind police lines at nazi events.

No disrespect to the individuals concerned, but it is well know this passivity has resulted in ANL members on a number of occasions receiving severe beatings from the BNP in particular - we await the first report of BNP members being given a hiding by the ANL. Organisations such as ARA and the YRE, on the other hand, take the precaution of refusing to operate on the streets at all and so do not offer themselves for target practice in this way. The unspoken fact is that these groups regard such confrontations, inevitable in any genuine struggle against fascism, as 'vulgar' or 'counter-productive'. It is sheer political cowardice that underlies all such attitudes. Working class people will quite rightly have nothing to do with an organisation which leads them into such situations without offering any response to fascist violence or even an appreciation of the dangers involved - or else avoids them altogether. As Trotsky says, ordinary workers will not follow an organisation that will not fight and which follows a policy of rank sectarianism. The 'moderate' anti-fascist groups with their "dread of fighting" which continues to **obstruct** effective anti-fascist unity are now, thankfully, being rapidly marginalised by events.

We're not in the situation that prevailed during the original rise of fascism when, as Trotsky wrote: "German fascism, like the Italian, raised itself to power on the backs of the petit-bourgeoisie, which it turned into a battering ram against the working class and the institutions of democracy." This time the "battering ram", the "razor in the hand of the class enemy" as Trotsky describes fascist brutality, is formed by fascist cadres drawn from the ranks of the white working class itself and is being directed against the left opposition at a crude street level. The object of fascist violence is to establish the neo-nazi movement as the 'natural party of disaffection' for sections of the white working class. If the fascists are successful in taking this, their first step, the transition to a more ambitious anti-working class programme tailored to a petit-bourgeoise political constituency will follow directly. The leap to a political bridgehead within the petit-bourgeoisie, at least in Britain, has yet to be made. The crucial battle for political leadership is taking place within the ranks of the working class.

So while it is clear that anti-fascist today do not operate under the heightened conditions of Germany during the rise of Nazism that prevailed at the time when Trotsky constructed his arguments against the passivity of the stalinists, it is equally clear that British fascists, riding on the back of the new momentum generated by the rise of the European neo-nazi movement, are making inroads into a white working class constituency they regard as their own. Considerable sections of the class are open to the influence of the most decisive and determined political force they encounter. Within his general analysis of the class nature of fascism, Trotsky himself identified this constituency in the circumstances of crisis-ridden Germany in these terms: "[The nazis] are capable of drawing in their wake, if they haven't already begum to do so, a stratum of the labour aristocracy... Considerably more dangerous, however, is its possible penetration from below, through the unemployed." This process is a very real danger today in the conditions of extended recession and labour demoralisation.

Lessons drawn by Trotsky from the '30s therefore still apply with full force. He wrote in 1932: "If the revolutionary Party... proves time and time again to be incapable of uniting the working class about it, if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petit-bourgeoisie loses patience and begins to look upon the revolu*tionary workers as those responsible for its own mis*ery...The petit-bourgeoisie can only follow the worker when it sees in him the new master..." This analysis applies equally in contemporary circumstances within the ranks of the working class itself in relation to disaffected or demoralised layers. The victory will go to the political current which shows itself to be the stronger: unaligned or wavering elements will undoubtedly be recruited by those forces which show themselves to be the most determined and principled who, "separate those who want to fight from those who do not." This analysis is very far from the machismo of the 'boot-boy'; as Trotsky insisted, it is a brutal fact of political reality.

The neo-nazi movement took a hammering at Waterloo and was forced to call off its planned Euro-gig that was to be held at Folkestone. That is a significant victory which with the right political will could be made into a turning point in the present day struggle against fascism. But the neo-nazis will regroup and there will be further battles. If the working class opposition to fascism is united within a single movement organised around a simple "practical agreement" around the undiluted principle of ideological and physical confrontation as successfully implemented by AFA, there is no doubt the nazis will meet with further humiliating and decisive defeats.If, as at present, the left's response is splintered into antagonistic groups with diversionary programmes which airbrush each other into non-existence, the final result will be in doubt. AFA showed at Waterloo that potential for mass action, for a united front of working class anti-fascist activists, is a real and vigorous option. It showed that accusations that so-called 'squaddism' was antagonistic to mass action has been entirely misplaced - as AFA always insisted they were. There were comfortably over 1,000 anti-fascists at Waterloo - some 'squad'! We know from bitter experience that appealing to *the leadership or the party front anti-fascist organisations to* support an alliance they do not directly control, is utterly futile. Red Action therefore appeals to all principled anti-fascist rank and file activists, whatever their previous history of alignment or non-alignment, to join the united front as it exists in practice, as it exists now - in

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THE POLITICS OF NO COM

MALCOLM X

Why he would have been hated by the Right, and why he would have hated the Left...

The making of Spike Lee's new film on Malcolm X will inevitably refocus attention on the American Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and sixties and its aftermath. In many senses, the career of Malcolm X signalled the rise of the Civil Rights movement and its attendant strategies, and its evolution towards avowedly revolutionary forms of black power.

For British socialists, consideration of the struggle of Afro-American peoples in the US will inevitably meet reflections in the contemporary struggle against racism and fascism in this country, and just as important, the struggle of the oppressed nationalist population in northern Ireland.

Malcolm X (the 'X' being adopted in the place of the 'slave name' with which a black muslim was born, signifying that their true african name was lost at the time of the slave trade) had seen his own house burnt down by the KKK while he was a young child and, shortly after, saw his father killed in a racist attack. He first gained notoriety within the Black Muslim movement headed by the self-proclaimed son of Allah, Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm announced he was leaving the Muslims only in March 1964 and was assassinated less than a year later. However, in this short period his recorded speeches and writings indicate he was taking a profoundly new direction - a secular, revolutionary direction (which he presumably had begun to formulate while still within the Muslim organisation).

Basic to his dissatisfaction was the sense that the Nation of Islam, while it talked up a storm about the 'white devils', actually took no action either to threaten the white racist establishment, or to support independent black action against it. *"The Black Muslim movement took no part in things political, civic - it didn't take too much part in anything other than stopping people from doing this smoking, drinking and so on. Moral reform it had, but beyond that it did nothing."*

Malcolm was clear he wanted to communicate his message to the grass roots black community - not to its self-styled leaders or intellectual bourgeoisie. To that end he declared, he would express his thoughts in a *"down to earth language that everyone can easily understand."* We do not therefore meet with a mass of revolutionary jargon in Malcolm's writings, let alone the fetishised Marxist jargon beloved of the left. Yet what he had to say and even the style in which it is written, can leave us in no doubt that we are reading the words of a true revolutionary - words which make the conventional 'Marxist' rhetoric of the left look pallid and irrelevant by comparison.

The first element of his previous allegiance he was to abandon was his religious orientation. His initial step on leaving the Muslims was to form the 'broad church' of the Muslim Mosque Inc. He soon realised even this orientation was mistaken, and replaced the Muslim Mosque Inc. with the Organisation Of Afro-American Unity - a wholly and avowedly secular organisation.

There were two central shifts involved in his turning away from the approach of the Black Muslim movement. First, the enemy was no longer identified as whitey. Tied to his conception of the white race as the cause of oppression was the argument that all blacks were automatically united by the common fact of discrimination no matter what class backgrounds they came from. Malcolm at this time appealed to all Afro-Americans to *"forget our differences" - since all american blacks were members of the "same family"*. As he put it to his (all black) audience: *"you sure don't catch hell because you're an american; because if you were an american you wouldn't catch hell. You catch hell because you're a black man. You catch hell, all of us catch hell, for the same reason...So we're all black people, so-called negroes, second class citizens, ex-slaves."*

Yet as soon as he was clear of the obligation to voice the reductionist views of the Black Muslims, he was shortly afterwards declaring that: *"Speaking like this doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean that we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression. If the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us."*

This is obviously a position of a qualitatively new kind. It isn't based on the fact of racial difference. It is based on social categories and ultimately implies a class analysis.

This new position is plainly articulated: *"I'm not a racist. I've never been a racist. I believe in indicting the system and the person who is responsible for our condition."*

He rejected the simple equation of racial and moral categories: *"they've always said that I'm anti-white. I'm for anybody who's for justice. I'm for anybody who's for equality. I'm not for anybody who tells me to sit around and wait for mine."*

Translated to specific terms: *"That doesn't mean that we're against white people, but we sure are against the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizen's Councils; and anything that looks like it's against us, we're against it."*

This is not, as he says, *"racism in reverse"*, or a *"KKK in reverse"*. At the bottom of such accusations is some *"tricky logic"*. Such accusations depend on the white liberal argument that the victims of racism shouldn't struggle *"except within the ground rules that the people you're struggling against have laid down."*

It did not prevent the US Communist Party from calling Malcolm and his followers "black fascists" (as for example Militant call the IRA 'Green Fascists') for rejecting constitutional methods of struggle. In his turn, Malcolm struck out at *"people who call themselves Marxists"* who *"claim to be against the system"* but who were actually *"on their hands and knees" working for the victory of 'left'* bourgeois parties . Leftists of this kind cooperated with the ruling classes in reversing the role of oppressor and oppressed.

"With skillful manipulation of the press they're able to make the victim look like the criminal and the criminal look like the victim."

Malcolm makes clear that he distances himself from some of his previous 'racist' views, but explains how such views come to have a hold on sections of the black population:

"So as a black man as especially as a black american, any stand I formerly took, I don't think I would have to defend it, because its still a reaction to the society, and it was a reaction that was produced by the society; and I think that it is the society that produced this that should be attacked, not the reation that develops among the people who are the victim of that negative society."

Malcolm disclaims belief in *"any form of discrimination or segregation"*. Racial separation was always understood by Malcolm to be quite different from racial segregation:

"They never refer to the white section as a segregated community. It's the all-Negro section that's a segregated community. Why?...When you're under someone else's control, you're segregated .... Segregation means that he (the white man) puts you away from him, but not far enough out of his jurisdiction; separation means you're gone."

Very soon, he was to revise, or at least clarify this position.

"All of us want recognition and respect as human beings. We don't want to be integrationists. Nor do we want to be separationists. We want to be human beings."

Malcolm believed separationism had nonetheless a legitimate place as a tactic rather than a principle; a *"method" rather than an "objective"* as he put it. He continued to maintain that under existing social conditions, black Americans should organise separately from white anti-racist organisations:

"Whites can help us, but they can't join us. There can be no black-white unity until there is first some black unity. There can be no workers' solidarity until there is first some racial solidarity, We cannot think of uniting with others until we have first united among ourselves."

It is important to be clear that for black Americans, there was precious little sign of white solidarity being on offer - from the white working class as much as from white bosses. As Trotsky had seen, albeit in 1939, *"today the white workers in relation to the Negroes are the oppressors, scoundrels, who persecute the Black and yellow, hold them in contempt, and lynch them."*

It is one thing to argue for the primacy of wider solidarity across a racial or sectarian divide when the clear potential for such solidarity already exists. Where it does not - as in the conflict in northern Ireland today - refusal to side with the existing fighting organisations of the oppressed people is as Trotsky insists, nothing less than an adaption to the ideology and practices of those doing the oppressing.

No doubt Malcolm had in mind the unhappy experiences of the white student and the white liberal interventions within existing civil rights organisations, such as SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) very much in mind. Time and again, such elements had distorted the spontaneous activities of working class black militants into ineffectual channels. Under conditions of such extravagant and racially explicit deprivation, the self-organisation of black Americans free from the hegemony of white liberal elements remote from the conditions and experiences of racial oppression was, he felt, a right and a necessity.

REJECTION OF NON VIOLENCE

The second revolution within Malcolm's position related to the philosophy of non-violence preached by the conservative and religious black freedom organisations such as SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), CORE (Commission On Racial Equality) and in its early days, SNCC. Their watchword was passive endurance. As Martin Luther King memorably expre-ssed it:

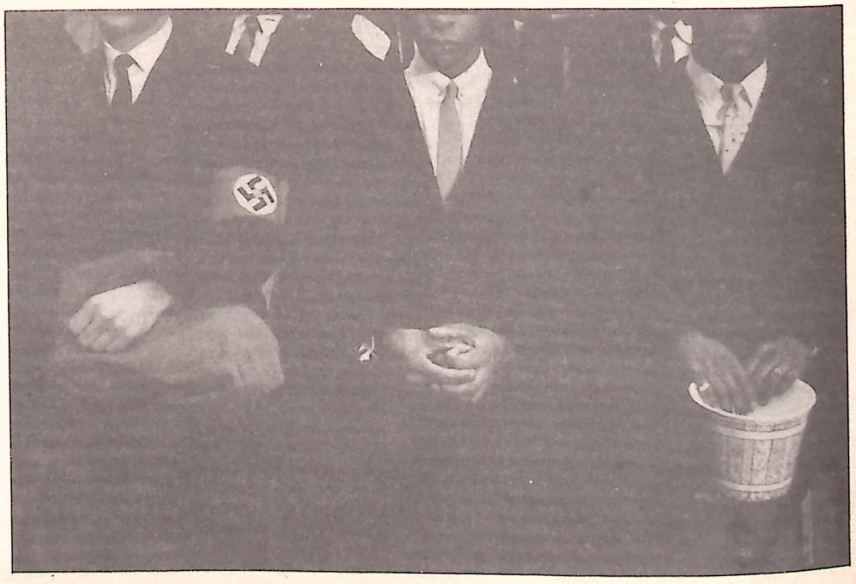
"We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering....We will wear you down by our capacity to suffer...Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood."

The problem was the blood sacrifice of courageous black activists to the batons, clubs and guns of Southern white police and racists flowed in rivers all right, but the arm and trigger fingers of the racists never seemed to grow any weaker.

If a single thesis could be identified with Malcolm's contributions to black revolutionism in the US, it would be his totally uncompromising defence of the right of an oppressed people to armed struggle. While still a member of the Nation of Islam he made some of his most impassioned protests against the doctrines of non-violence. He speaks of the French, American and Russian Revolutions: *"How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed."*

He berates his black audience: *"And you're afraid to bleed....As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes to seeing you're own churches being bombed and little girls being murdered (as in Birmingham, Alabama) you haven't got any blood."*

His own prescription he summarised as follows: "Be peaceful, be courteous, obey the law, respect everyone; but if someone puts his hand on you, send him to the cemetery. That's a good religion."



Inescapable logic of Black Nationalism is to insist on the primacy of racist credentials over those of class (above) American Black Muslims share a platform with White Supremacists.

PROMISE &

Non-violence only functions in a non-violent situation, that is, where oppression no longer exists. But this is not the case in America:

"I don't go along with any kind of non-violence unless everybody's going to be non-violent. If they make the Ku Klux Klan non-violent, I'll be non-violent. If they make the White Citizen's Councils non-violent, I'll be non-violent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any non-violent talk."

The reformist, essentially petty-bourgeois politics of Gandhi, must be replaced by the politics of revolution.

"the day of non-violent resistance is over; the day of passive resistance is over."

In a formation which perhaps deliberately echoes that of Marx, he concludes another speech to a black grass roots audience with the words:

"You haven't anything to lose but discrimination and segregation."

Early in 1965, a month before his assassination, Malcolm sent a public notice to Lincoln Rockwell, head of the American Nazi Party:

"This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad's separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to....black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not handcuffed by the disarming philosophy of non-violence, and who believe in the right of self-defence - by any means necessary."

There is an obvious lesson here for contemporary anti-fascist organisations.

Revolutionary action therefore involves violence as the legitimate and vital weapon against oppression of what ever kind.

"Revolution is bloody, revolution is hostile, revolution knows no compromise, revolution overturns and destroys everything in its way."

But it is the violence used, ultimately for possession, for reversing the economic conditions of oppression.

"Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence, and the only way they could get if was bloodshed. The French Revolution - what was it based on? The landless against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost, was no compromise, was no negotiation."

In these terms, immediately comprehensible to all, Malcolm makes it crystal clear that a revolution entails the overthrow of existing economic conditions and their reappropriation by those making the revolution. He doesn't call them the 'means of production' as Marx did, but the meaning is clear. Violent insurrection and the seizure of the conditions of economic control are the preconditions of revolution and they distinguish revolution and revolutionary measures from reform and reformism.

Malcolm was the clearest voice pointing in this new direction: but he was reflecting a wider perception within the grass roots black movement. During the summer of 1964 SNCC undertook a voter registration drive and other projects in Mississippi: several activists were killed in racist atrocities. SNCC leader James Forman wrote that these experiences *"confirmed the absolute necessity of self defence"*. As the tactics of Martin Luther King and the black middle class and white liberal dominated NAACP and CORE began to disintegrate in mutual recrimination, Malcolm says,

"they began to lose control of the black masses. The Negroes were out there in the streets. They were talking about how they were going to march on Washington. Right at that time Birmingham had exploded and the Negroes in Birmingham.....began to stab the crackers (white supremacists) in the back and bust them up 'side their head....they were going to march on Washington, march on the Senate, march on the White House, march on the Congress and tie it up, bring it to a halt, not let it proceed... That was revolution. That was the black revolution. It was the grass roots out there in the street."

The Civil Rights campaign had ground to a halt, Malcolm argued. After ten years of non-violent agitation,

"We're not even as far up as we were in 1954. We're behind where we were in 1954. There's more segregation now than there was in 1954. There's more racial animosity, more racial hatred, more racial violence today in 1964, than there was in 1954. Where is the progress?"

The Civil Rights movement had used the tactics of nonviolence for liberal objectives - reform, not revolution. Malcolm acknowledged that, *"Good education, housing and jobs are imperatives for the Negroes, and I shall support them in their fight win these objectives, but I shall tell the Negroes that while they are necessary, they cannot solve the main Negro problem."*

The change from a reformist to a revolutionary strategy was necessary, but: *"there is no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. The only kind of revolution that is nonviolent is the Negro revolution....It's the only revolution in which the goal is a desegregated lunch counter, a desegregated theatre, a desegregated park, and a desegregated public toilet ...That's no revolution ...Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality."*

What solution did Malcolm propose?

"The entire Civil Rights struggle movement culminated in the passage of Civil Rights legislation, and the movement foundered when it became apparent that legislation failed to reach into the heart of the problem.

When you go down to Washington DC, expecting those crooks down there - and that's what they are - to pass some kind of civil rights legislation to correct a very criminal situation, what you are doing is to encourage the black man, who is the victim, to take his case into the courts that's controlled by the criminal that made him the victim. It will never be solved in that way."

On the contrary, so far from pleading with a racist establishment to stop racism or bargaining with the state to stop state violence,

"The only way you're going to stop the Ku Klux Klan is to stop it yourself...the government can't stop it because the government has infiltrated the Klan and the Klan has infiltrated the government."

In fact Malcolm spotlights a further effect of Gandhian civil rights type campaigns.

"Right after they passed the civil rights bill, they murdered a negro in Georgia and did nothing about it; murdered two whites and a negro in Mississippi and did nothing about it. So that the civil rights bill has produced nothing where we're concerned. It was only a valve, a vent, that was designed to enable us to let off our frustrations."

Such campaigns are designed to act to reduce the threat of change: *"these are devices to lessen the danger of the explosion, but not designed to remove the material that's going to explode."*

Anticipating the violent insurrections of future years such as the explosion in the Watts district of Los Angeles and the burning of Detroit, he predicts that *"in 1965 even more blood will flow"*.

"Why will it flow? have the causes that caused it to flow in '64 been removed? Have the causes that made it flow in '63 been removed? The causes are still here....."

As the 1992 riots in Los Angeles showed more plainly than ever, *"the causes are still there"* today.

Civil rights had to be replaced by a broader objective, an objective that Malcolm called *"human rights"*.

"We need to expand the civil rights struggle to a higher level - to the level of human rights."

Unfortunately, this conception was never developed by Malcolm beyond an abstract stage: *"We are fighting for recognition as human beings. We are fighting for the right to live as free humans in this society. In fact, we are actually fighting for rights that are even greater than civil rights and that is human rights...."*

It emerges that civil rights are what you ask the government to do on your behalf; human rights are something that are obtained through your own action, your own power. Human rights are the product of self emancipation.

Malcolm began by identifying this struggle with the programme of black nationalism. The 'black nationalist' replaces the 'negro' civil rights worker. Black nationalists do not regard themselves as Americans, he says: *"They look upon themselves as a part of dark mankind. They see the whole struggle on the world stage."*

Black nationalists are in fact, internationalists, generalising the struggle of oppressed people beyond its particular manifestation in the US. This is necessary because,*"It's impossible for you and me to know where we stand until we look around on this entire earth....We don't know where we stand until we know where America stands. You don't know where you stand in America until you know where America stands in the world."*

More and more, Malcolm came to stress the importance of understanding the exploitation and oppression suffered by American blacks in the context of oppression as a world wide system.

Most dangerous of all were those kind of groups and their leaders that lived a double life - whose allegiance was ostensibly to the oppressed but which in practice were parasitic upon the state they attacked. In a late interview, he was asked about his attitude to established civil rights organisations: *"I'm for whatever gets results. I don't go for any organisation.... that has to compromise with the power structure and has to rely on certain elements within the power structure for their financing, which puts them in a position to be influenced and controlled all over again by the power structure itself."*

Both SNCC and CORE were bought off in this way. The problem of such 'leaders', "mouthpieces that control the politics of the community", occupied Malcolm in some detail.

"I'm for anything they get involved in that gets a meaningful results for the masses of our people - but not for the benefit of a few hand-picked negroes at the top who get prestige and credit, and all the while the masses' problems remain unsolved."

He again uses the example of the march on Washington, which started as a genuinely revolutionary tactic, inspired by grass roots activism.

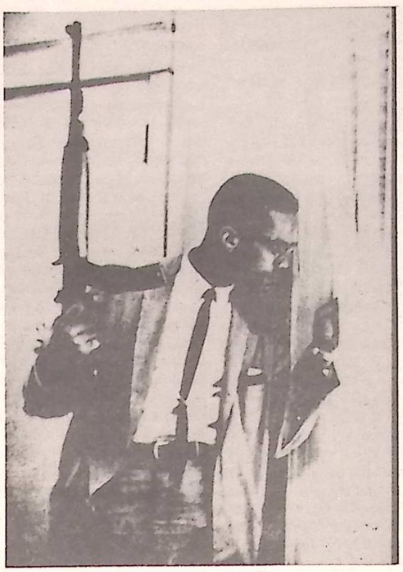
"When they found out that this black steamroller was going to come down on the capital.... they called in all these Negro leaders that you respect and told them, 'Call it off'....And old Tom said, Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it." And that old shrewd fox, (President) Kennedy, he said, 'If you aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse you!"

In the end, the function of such leaders (individual or collective) is the opposite of what it appears to be.

"The only time you see them is when the people are exploding. The leaders are shot into the situation and told to control things. You can't show me a leader that has set off an explosion....This is their role - they're just there to contain you and me, to restrain the struggle, to keep it in a certain groove, and not let it get out of control. We want to get out of control."

To use an example close to home, leaders of the second Thamesmead march (supported by the SWP), which contained many highly aggressive elements, tricked it into walking away from the fascists and then congratulated themselves on having presented the correct slogans while the fascists strutted away to build upon their success.

Ultimately, the true role of such leaderships is to negotiate favourable breaks for the black petty bourgeoisie. Class antagonisms within the layers of black society are the decisive factor.



Malcolm equates these elements with the "house negroes" of slave times.

"There were two kinds of slaves, the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes - they lived in the house with master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good because they ate his food.....and they loved the master more than the master loved himself. That was the house Negro. And that's what we call them today, because we've still got some house niggers still running around here."

This strata was very different in its attitudes from the 'field Negro'.

"The field Negroes - those were the masses. There were always more Negroes in the field than there were in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell....The field Negro was beaten from morning to night; he lived in a shack, in a hut' he wore old cast off clothes. He hated the master."

The *'house negroes'* of contemporary American society were *"doctors, lawyers, a preacher or some other kind of Uncle Tom."* Such elements form a *"black bourgeoisie"* through which *"the white power structure downtown controls the black community"*.

At one time, Malcolm certainly saw part of the programme of black nationalists in such petty-bourgeois measures as black control over black businesses, the replacement of white business owners within black communities by black business owners etc. But he came to put less and less emphasis on such perspectives. In one of his last interviews he said, *"I used to define black nationalism as the idea that the black man should control the economy of his community, the politics of this community, and so forth."*

He tells how his experiences while travelling in Africa made him change his mind - he had met whites who were for him, perfectly good revolutionaries.

"In my recent travels in the African countries and others, it was impressed upon me the importance of having a working unity among all peoples, black as well as white."

Obviously, a revision of this kind carried far reaching implications for his entire philosophy: *"So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of black nationalism...if you notice, I haven't been using the expression for several months."*

As a revolutionary philosophy, Black nationalism had proved a dead end.

In re-thinking his position of inter-racial alliances, he remained true to certain fundamental principles. Black emancipation was still placed solidly on a basis of the *self-interest of Afro-Americans: "If you have a contribution to make to our development, do it. But that doesn't mean we're with you or against you ...We're for ourselves. Whatever is good for us, that's what we're interested in. That doesn't mean that we're against you. But it does mean that we're for ourselves."*

The idea that radical white groups could earn the gratitude of black Americans for certain varieties of charitable work, is uncompromisingly r*ejected - in Malcolm's words, "you don't need to give us a crutch. The black man has to be shown how to free himself."* To be 'given' freedom or equality is in contradiction with itself, for: *"There's only one way to be independent. There's only one way to be free. It's not something that somebody gives to you. It's something that you take."*

The only firm basis for an alliance lies in an alliance of each group's self-interest; joint action is to be consciously based on the self interest of both. White liberal guilt, sympathy or patronage is itself a symptom of a racist society. But this insistence on the right of black communities to self organisation is completely at variance with the dogma that only black led organisations can be anti-racist. Still worse is the smear that white anti-racist groups 'must' be racist, or as it is expressed in classically Orwellian language, "unconsciously racist".

In the fight against racism and fascism in this country for example, all socialists should be absolutely clear that the reason for working with those who are the immediate targets of the racists and fascists, is that reactionary groups are also the enemies of the whole working class. Put yourself in the firing line against fascist organisations for example, in contrast to some self publicising 'committee against racism', and you will certainly experience 'oppression' at first hand. 'Oppression' at the hands of the fascists or the state isn't an experience confined to blacks, and in particular, not to the black middle class. To insist otherwise, as for example ARA does, is to play the racist's own game. It is to insist on the primacy of racist credentials over those of class. By requiring the leadership of all anti-racist organisations to be black (ARA) racial criteria

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are implicitly assumed to be decisive in the consciousness and structure of social formations, White supremacists say the same.

The logic is inescapable.Where race, not class, is considered to be the primary factor determining social relations, some very disturbing questions follow right along. If only blacks guarantee authentic anti-racist leadership, it will have to be ascertained whether for example, a person with a single black grandparent is 'black' - Or whether a single black great grandparent leaves a person 'white' - The politicians of Nazi Germany debated such questions with ferocious enthusiasm. In practice, the logic of such a position dictates that you inevitably end up sitting at the same table as the racists themselves. Following this route, Marcus Garvey met with the deputy leader of the KKK in 1922, declaring: *"I regard the Klan, the Anglo Saxon clubs and white American Societies, as far better friends of the (black) race than all other groups of hypocritical whites put together."*

Sixty years later, the Nation of Islam invited the leader of the American Nazi Party, Lincoln Rockwell, and his colleagues to attend its conference which they duly did. Nazi's sat side by side with black Muslims. Malcolm realised that a philosophy which led to such grotesque tactics must be repudiated.

At the stage the anti-racist struggle had reached in mid-sixties America, Malcolm felt that this emphasis on racial autonomy, the parallel but distinct interests of radical black and white groups, dictated separatist organisation.

But this did not exclude working with anti racist non-black organisations. *"We will work with anyone, with any group, no matter what their colour is, as long as they are genuinely interested in taking the kinds of step necessary to bring an end to the injustices that black people in this country are afflicted by."*

He appends a significant warning: *"But if they're in any way that compromising, dangerous type of person, then we think they should be dealt with."*

How did he define 'compromising and dangerous' in this connection?

"I believe that there are some white people who might be sincere. But I think they should prove it. And you can't prove it by singing with me. You can't prove it by being nonviolent. No, you can prove it by recognising the law of justice. And the law of justice is 'he who kills by the sword should be killed by the sword.' This is justice."

White anti-racists organisations therefore, are presented a clear criterion according to whether or not they are "sincere" or not. Such an approach will not appeal to any organisations who talk up a revolutionary storm, but who cherish reformist tactics - those who are too "squeamish" for physical confrontation.

Malcolm describes his attitude in another parable.

"If I came home and find some blood on the leg of one of my little girls, and my wife told me that a snake bit the child, I'd go looking for the snake. And if I found the snake, I wouldn't necessarily take time to see if it had blood on its jaws. As far as I'm concerned the snake is the snake. So if snakes don't want someone hunting snakes indiscriminately, I say snakes should get together and clean out their snakey house."

This and similar declarations are a mile away from the measured rhetoric of conventional socialist ('revolutionary') publications. The natural reflex of many such 'revolutionaries' will be to immediately to draw lines around some snakes to distinguish them from other types of snake. So if for example the IRA blows up a van load of snakes building prisons for the security forces, or a right wing snake who happens to be a minister in the Tory government, they will protest that they are the wrong sort of snake. In the aftermath of firm actions against certain groups of snake, they will protest against the 'provocation' of snakes. Malcolm brushes aside reformist liberal alliances of this kind: *"I don't accept any nonviolent liberals. This doesn't mean that you've got to be violent; but it does mean that you can't be nonviolent...."*

So how do those who are themselves not the immediate objects of oppression, but who claim to be on the side of those who are i.e. predominately white anti-racist and anti-fascist groups, prove their credentials?

"When the day comes when the whites who are really fed up - I don't mean those jive whites, who pose as liberals and who are not - when they learn how to really establish the proper type of communication with those uptown who are fed up, and they get some coordinated action going, you'll get some changes ...But how many feel that they could truly identify with a struggle that was designed to eliminate the basic causes that create the conditions that exist? Not very many. They can jive; but when it comes to identifying yourself with a struggle that is not endorsed by the power structure, that is not acceptable, where the ground rules are not laid down by the society which you live in and which you're struggling against - you can't identify with that, you step back."

"The Civil Rights Bill was only a valve that was designed to enable us to let off our frustrations"

This is the inescapable cue for white anti-racist and anti-fascist groups. Working with those who are the direct object of racial violence and discrimination is only possible under the conditions of direct action. This is precisely the trouble with many anti-racist groups; those who wish to pursue the struggle within the confines of the existing system sabotage and frustrate the efforts of those who are truly determined to fight it by any means necessary. Malcolm identifies the problem in this way: *"The one mistake that has been factionalised too much ...Instead of having any degree of coordination toward a common objective, usually they are divided and spend a lot of time either being suspicious of each other, or even outright fighting each other."*

The outcome is a situation where everyone claims they want to fight racism and fascism *'by any means necessary'*, and where each anti-racist organisation announces that it is for unity - but unavoidably, and for the purest of doctrinal reasons, has to operate behind its own front organisation instead of a single alliance. Worse still they obstruct the work of those anti-racists who believe, like Malcolm, that an effective stance involving physical confrontation is the key to anti-racist authenticity. When did you last see a member of ARA or the ANL or the Militant front bashing a fascist?

To overcome this tendency to sectarianism, Malcolm proposed the formation of a non-factional umbrella organisation that would unite all ideological factions under a simple programme of action. He was against the idea, beloved of the left, that the solution is formulated by the construction of an abstract 'programme' that is then 'presented' to the 'masses.' The object is not for a group of revolutionary 'leaders' (the 'cadre') to sit in a back room cooking up all sorts of exotic recipes for revolution, but rather, *"to give people a thorough understanding of what it is that confronts them, and the basic causes that produce, and they'll create their own programme; and when the people create a programme, you'll get action. When these 'leaders' create programmes, you get no action."*

Malcolm always held that it is social relations rather than the simple fact of race, which finally account for the oppression endured by black Americans. Soon after leaving the Nation of Islam, Malcolm outlined the process of economic exploitation that underlines the social and political facts of discrimination: *"You take the people who are in the audience right now. They're poor ... Our weekly salary individually hardly amounts to anything. But if you take the salary of everyone here collectively ...its a lot of wealth. When you look at it like that, think how rich Uncle Sam had become, not with this handful, but millions of black people."*

It is upon this fact of exploitation and the social pressures founded upon it that the unity of black Americans is founded: *"oppression made them brothers; segregation made them brothers; humiliation made them brothers."*

Given these conditions, the position of the black masses at the sharpest end of the working class is at its most naked and antagonistic, the potential for revolutionary leadership is created. As Trotsky recognised: *"It is very possible that the Negroes will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then be the vanguard."*

The institutionalisation of race prejudice is carried on according to a system, and as Malcolm increasingly insisted, the name of that system is capitalism.

"A chicken just doesn't have it within its system to produce a duck egg. It can't do it. It can only produce according to what that particular system was constructed to produce. The system in this country cannot produce freedom for an Afro-American. It is impossible for this system, this economic system, this political system, this system period. It's impossible for this system, as it stands, to produce freedom right now for the black man in this country."

Of course, the system is not confined to America.

"Most of the countries that were colonial powers were capitalist countries, and the last bulwark of capitalism today is America. It's impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism without racism. You can't have capitalism without racism."

The exploitive nature of capitalism is fixed, it is unchangeable without the destruction of capitalism itself:

"You can't operate a capitalist system unless you are vulturistic; you have to have someone else's blood to suck to be a capitalist. You show me a capitalist, and I'll show you a bloodsucker. He cannot be anything else but a bloodsucker if he's going to be a capitalist...He's got to get it from somewhere other than himself, and that's where he gets it - from someone other than himself".

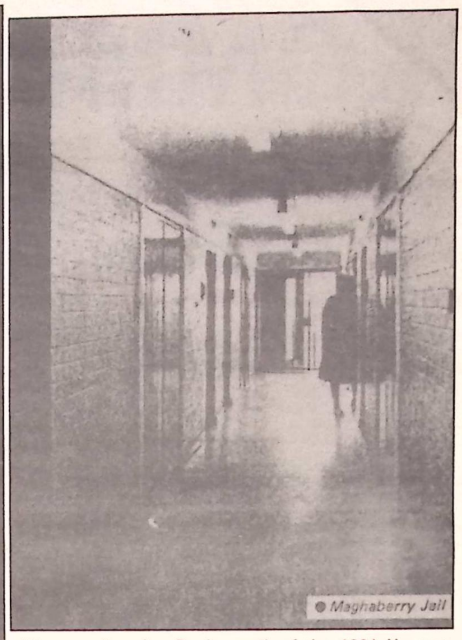
But the capitalist does more than simply steal what by right belongs to other people; he destroys the possibility of wealth being accumulated by anyone but himself:

"European factories can't produce unless they have someplace to market her products. It is for this reason that the European nations in the past have kept the nations in Latin America and in Africa and in Asia from becoming industrial powers. They keep the machinery and the ability to produce and manufacture limited to Europe and limited to America. Then this puts America and the Europeans in a position to control the economy of all other nations and keep them living at a low standard."

The oppression of black Americans is therefore not exclusively an American problem, nor is it in the last analysis, even a racial problem: *"I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone, and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation. I believe that there will be that kind of clash, but I don't think that it will be based upon the colour of skin..."*

It follows that: *"It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the negro as simply a racial conflict of black against white, or as purely an American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter. The Negro revolution is not a racial revolt."*

Arguments as to the exact degree to which Malcolm was moving towards an explicit form of revolutionary socialism and would have succeeded in shedding the illusions he continued to retain at the time of his assassination - for example in the socialist character of Stalinist regimes and African nationalism - are marginal. Socialist who pontificate over his ideological credentials miss the most important fact of all: that Malcolm X at the end of his life had developed into an uncompromising revolutionary. His speeches form one of the most powerful indictments of reformist attitudes, apologies and compromises ever made. They are also fine defences and examples of what Marx called "revolutionary passion". *"Power in defence of freedom is greater than power in defence of tyranny and oppression, because power, real power, comes from conviction which produces action, uncompromising action. It also produces insurrection against oppression. This is the onl way you end oppression - with power."*



Nine months after Paula Burns and her comrades were forcibly and brutally strip-searched in Maghaberry Gaol, the terror of the attack remains. Long after the physical pain has subsided, the fear of being attacked again continues. Adding to the pain and fear is the knowledge that the attack on 2 March is part of an orchestrated campaign to demoralise and ultimately defeat the political prisoners.

Paula is a 24-year-old republican prisoner held on explosives-related charges. She is held in Mourne House, the women's section of Maghaberry. There are 21 republican prisoners held in Mourne House. They are housed in three wings - seven women to one wing.

Maghaberry Gaol was opened in 1983 in the aftermath of the 1981 Hunger Strikes and in the wake of a continuing struggle within Long Kesh as, in official parlance, "an option after sentencing". In other words, by using age-old "carrot and stick" techniques the authorities were trying, once again, to "normalise" the situation in British gaols in Ireland. Prisoners who agreed to transfer to Maghaberry, conform to the regime and give up their claim to political status were rewarded with promises of a more relaxed regime, greater privileges and increased chances of parole.

In return, the Nothern Ireland Office hoped it could normalise the prison situation. According to its plan, political prisoners - demoralised by the hunger strikes - would flock to Maghaberry.

There remained one prob-

NICARAGUA *The* FORGOTTEN REVOLUTION

On the morning of 27 February 1990, the people of Nicaragua awoke to a new and unexpected future. Much to the surprise of both the supporters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the United Nicaragua Opposition (UNO), the election results did not signify a continuation of Sandinista rule in their country.

The UNO coalition of 14 different political parties fully expecting total defeat suddenly found itself elected to power.

Across the country realisation sank in. In the northern city of Matagalpa where for many years the contra war had always been close, the streets were empty of traffic and people.Throughout the country, many workers and peasants, believing the contra mercenaries based in Honduras were to be used to seize control of cities, began arming themselves ready to fight. And so began Nicaragua's new "era of democracy".

Nicaragua, under the Sandinistas was the subject of a constant flow of disinformation, lies and paranoid fantasies generated by the White House and picked up by the bourgeoisie media abroad. The Sandinistas, having no alternative media network to counter the attacks stressed the importance of people going to Nicaragua to experience for themselves the reality of the revolution.

Nicaragua was to draw many people during its revolutionary years from individual travellers and study tours to ideologically-motivated International Brigades. The International Brigades were set up in the spirit of those who had shown solidarity with the Spanish people during their civil war. In Nicaragua, the country's severe lack of labour during the coffee harvest period and lack of moral support in their own civil war, made the brigades an important link. The brigades' contributed work and solidarity and, in return, gained an insight into Nicaraguan peasant life and learned about the revolution.

In December 1988 I joined the John Maclean Brigade, Scotland's first International Brigade, and became one of the many thousands of activists to experience the

"THEY WON'T BEAT US!"

lem. With the closing down of the Victorian and decrepit Armagh Gaol, women political prisoners would also have to be held in Maghaberry. But , the NIO thought, as there were only 21 women republican prisoners they could be contained in Mourne House and would not, given their small numbers be able to wreak havoc on the master-plan.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In the words of the NIO: "These 21 women cause us more problems than the whole prison population put together."

The republican prisoners had fought alongside their male comrades for political status following its withdrawal in 1976. In Armagh Gaol, they were organised under the command of an appointed OC and had fought for their rights, as well as recognition, as political prisoners. That fight had not been easy. The women had taken their place alongside the men in Long Kesh on the 1980 hunger-strike. From 1982 they had to endure the humiliation and brutality of regular strip-searching, used as a weapon to break them.

The women brought with them to Maghaberry that proud legacy of resistance - much to the NIO's dismay!

Between 1983 and August last year, the women enjoyed much of the status they had *fought for in Armagh. Their* appointed OC was recognised by the Governor. They were allowed inter-wing association, wore their own clothes, had access to education classes and reserved the right to refuse to do prison work.

With the appointment of Robert Gibson, ex-governor of Long Kesh, in August, the prison authorities went on the offensive against the republican women. In the following months inter-wing association was banned which meant the women could only associate in groups of seven. Access to education classes was severely curtailed. Harsh punishments for petty offences were introduced. Most seriously of all, Gibson refused to recognise or meet with the OC. The women's claim to political status was being challenged.

This campaign to force the women to conform came to a head in March this year.

For the first time ever, every single woman in Mourne House, political and non-political prisoners alike, were strip-searched in their cells. There was no warning. The republican prisoners fiercely resisted.

Paula Burns told us what happened: "We were kept locked in our cells in the morning and told there was going to be a search. We assumed it was going to be a cell search. *After about an hour, one of the* women shouted: 'They're going to strip-search us.' Shortly after, I heard the screams of one of the women. She was the first to be strip-searched.

"I share a cell with Anne-Marie McCabe and together we barricaded our cell door. We were determined to defend ourselves. If you're being attacked you have to defend yourself.

"The strip-searches went on all morning. As the screws moved from one cell to the other we could hear our comrades screaming and shouting. We couldn't see much, but we could hear the sound of barricades being ripped down, of women being assaulted and we could hear male screws laughing and shouting.They only stopped when it was lunchtime.

"When it came to our turn, male screws dressed in boiler suits and riot gear forced open the door and broke down the barricade and about 12 female screws entered our cell. Ann-Marie was taken from the cell and I was pushed to the floor. My arms and legs were held in different locks while my clothes were ripped off.

"I could see male screws standing outside my cell and they were making obscene gestures with their fingers and shouting sexual remarks. It was sickening. I was forcibly dress-ed and taken into the association room.

"I saw people from the Board of Visitors on the wing. They were disgusting. They come in and tell us they are here to make sure we're alright but they were there that day just watching what was happening, not trying to stop it."

Despite the viciousness of the attack, Paula and her comrades are determined they will not be beaten. Having come this far, they have no plans to fit in with the NIO's idea of "model" prisoners. The women recognise the attack is part of a wider campaign. Their belief is confirmed with the shelling out of punishments for resisting the strip-search - currently the subject of a legal appeal. Women who refused to go to the kitchen to work following the strip-search have been further punished. Overall, conditions in Mourne House for the republican prisoners are deteriorating rapidly.

"These 21 women cause us more problems than the whole prison population put together."

Paula Baker summed up the futility of the NIO's attempts to break the women's morale: "They won't beat us," she said.

The ferocity of the attack on 2 March has compelled the families and supporters of the women to launch the Stop-Strip Searches Campaign. They have collated personal statements from the women about the attack, held white-line pickets, set up branches throughout the six counties and conducted a successful speaking tour in Britain.

We spoke to Mena Baker, the mother of Shauneen Baker (19) who is also being held on explosives-related charges. Mena said Shauneen is a different person since the attack took place: "She is very withdrawn. She said to me: "When I go to bed I don't know what's going to happen in the morning."

Despite this young woman's fear, her resolve is all the more determined. In a letter to her mother, she said: "Don't worry mammy, we're the ones who can hold our heads up."

Mena and other relatives are keen to see as much protest as possible taking place over the strip-searches. They, like their daughters, are afraid the NIO may strike again.

Not surprisingly, the left here in Britain failed once again to respond. Before the Red Action-initiated speaking tour in October, no effective activity took place in solidarity with the republican women prisoners. However, once the speaking tour was underway many organisations responded positively including Nalgo, the CADV, Workers Power, the Leninist, the RCG and the IFM. The unifying potential of this campaign is clearly apparent.

Meanwhile, Paula, Ann-Marie, Shauneen and their comrades daily confront the screws who ripped off their dignity as well as their clothes. Their determination means that *for all the millions of pounds the NIO has spent on trying to* turn Maghaberry into a model prison, the spirit of resistance has shown again that it cannot be bought off or beaten into submission.

Interview conducted on behalf of Red Action by R.L.

NATIONAL SPEAKING TOUR

Relatives and friends of the republican prisoners in Maghaberry conducted a successful two week speaking tour in Britain in October to demand an end to strip-searching. They addressed four public meetings in London, Manchester, Edinburgh abd Glasgow, numerous trade union meetings, student, community and political groups. Interveiws were conducted with the press, radio and political papers. The speaking tour was sponsored by NALGO Women's Committee, six Labour MPs, the Campaign Against Domestic Violence and was co-ordinated by Red Action. Despite attempts by the state and its agents to disrupt the tour, including arresting speakers coming in and leaving the country under the PTA. A phone call by Fascists to Manchester radio led to a search of the venue by the bomb squad. Nothing was found and the meeting went ahead. The tour was a promising start to a campaign of undoubted, but as yet untapped potential.

Restistance to the regime takes many forms inlcuding armed resistance

black sheep in Central America's family.

Those were exhilarating times. Managua had a thriving, continuously changing, international community of mainly US and European brigades, congregating around the area of the Avenida Ho Chi Minh when not working and contributing to Nicaraguan demonstrations. Among them were Basque seperatists, German and Swiss Autonomes, FMLN war wounded and supporters of Irish resistance armies.

For almost 11 years from 1979 to 1990, the Sandinista revolution brought great changes to Nicaragua that began in the immediate aftermath of the insurrectional victory. Only months after the overthrow of the dictator Somoza, the Sandinista junta launched a national literacy crusade which reduced illiteracy from over 50 per cent to under 13 per cent. Education was expanded. A national health service was created bringing free health care and eradicating killer diseases such as measles and polio. Large agricultural enterprises were nationalised and the Sandinistas were also credited with many environmental commitments.

Women, who for years had lived under the yoke of reactionary Catholic morality were to win rights they had never before known.

Peoples' participation in the new society was actively encouraged and within five years of the insurrection's triumph, unionisation of the workforce rose from six per cent to over 55 per cent.

The 10th anniversary of the revolution, 19 July 1989, saw a massive turnout of people including foreign nationals into revolution square in Managua. As President Ortega and others addressed the crowd effigies of Bush were burned and flags of oppressed peoples' struggles from all over the world flew in the wind. An anarchist banner was read to the crowd from the platform: "Feed the poor, starve the rich." It was hard to believe that with the intense revolutionary feeling in the crowd, the FSLN was to be defeated in the election only seven months later.

When the newsreaders declared the Nicaraguan revolution dead many people in the west accepted their word and interest dropped. Britain's Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign lost a high percentage of its membership. In "leftie" newspapers, Nicaragua had all but disappeared. News however was filtering back about the Sandinistas' spirited resistance to the imposition of reactionary laws.So in 1991 I joined another brigade and went back.

I found Nicaragua greatly changed in the three years since I was last there. Walking through Managua again, the consequences of reactionary rule became clearer.

The Avenida Ho Chi Minh had lost its name and now was just another busy, unrepaired road. Where once a mural, running for several yards and charting Nicaraguan history from Spanish conquerors to the revolution, had stood bright and colourful, now stood a blackened wall.

In the plaza Espana where people once went to relax with a drink, the returned "Miami set" had moved in. The supermarket, "La Coloniale", that stood at one end of the plaza which once sold cheap imports from Cuba and the USSR together with Nicaraguan produce now sold expensive US products to those who could afford them.

The Sandinistas, still by far the largest single party in Nicaragua, had resisted with some degree of success the UNO Government's attacks on the revolution's gains. However, the damage had been great. The national health service, stricken by severe shortages of equipment due to being starved of funds, could not prevent the rise in infant mortality. Diseases eradicated by the revolution returned, among them measles and cholera.

In the field of education, spending has greatly been slashed and over 9,000 teachers face unemployment. Illiteracy is greatly on the rise and many students face cuts in grants and government subsidies. Over seven million US dollars worth of textbooks that had been donated by the Norwegian Government were destroyed on the grounds that they were too political and those concerning sex education, "too explicit".

To counter the Sandinista's land reform, the UNO Government passed a law allowing large land owners the right to lease back confiscated property with a view to its complete return. This decree was taken advantage of by many Somozistas. Large scale privitisation of state assets have also been carried out.

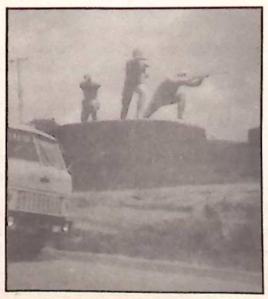
The ecological revolution has been greatly affected. Proposals have been put forward to dump toxic waste on the Atlantic coast. The rain forests are once again under threat from timber merchants from the US and, more recently, Taiwan. These changes were made without prior consultation with the environmental institute.

The position of women has also suffered. The conservative, patriarchal morality towards women in society was re-emphasising their role as wives and mothers. Abortion and contraception was greatly condemned and sexism found its way back into the media where it continues unrestrained.

The UNO Government, however, from when it took office in April 1990 has faced problems . The following month they found themselves confronted by a general strike. The situation, already serious, was made all the more difficult by the fact both the police and army, largely supported the strikers' demands. This led to barricades being dismantled slowly by the military giving the strikers plenty of time to leave the areas the troops were ordered into.

The 12th anniversary of the revolution, 19 July 1991, saw more than 40,000 people crammed into the Plaza de la Revolution. Daniel Ortega, addressing the crowd, declared: "Our enemies claim that Sandinismo is dead. Where do all these people come from?" He called for a reconfirmation of the spirit of Sandinismo .

Article and photos by A. Robertson



(above) Sandinista memorial

★LETTERS★

HEADLESS CHICKENS

Dear Red
Action,
Enclosed are a few back issues of the Welsh Socialist Party's paper, Y Faner Goch. It comes out every two months and perhaps we can arrange an exchange with Red Action, which seems to be one of the few (very few!) left organisations in England with any idea of what's going on and what to do. It was very refreshing to read the articles about Scotland and Euskadi in your latest issue, so much at odds with the Headless Chicken Tendency and Reactionary Reformist Group-types that make up the Brit left today.
Hopefully we can exchange a few ideas on the national question and the way revolutionary socialists can operate now the East European bureaucracies have crumbled.
Yn frawdol, fraternally,
Marc Jones
Secretary, Cymru Goch

IMPRESSED

A Chairde,
I was recently sent a copy of Red Action no. 62. Noticing your address as well as the mention of the BBC piece I though it would be useful to write. I'd heard very indirectly of RA, mainly in connection with Anti-Fascist Action but this is the first opportunity to find out more. Could you send me a copy of your information pamphlet? It would be greatly appreciated, as would any other material you think would be useful. I was very surprised with the material that AFA in London sent me, not least because of their base in working-class politics and their policy of the united front. I believe that there are similar problems developing in Dublin.
By the way, there's a letter in RA no. 62 on page 3 which mentions the Leninist, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! and a publication Open Polemic. The first two I know, Open Polemic I don't. Do you know of it? Is it any good? If it is, do you have a contact address. We get most of the Irish material up here and some English but I've not come across this one. Are you planning to produce your own material?
I look forward to hearing from you when you get the chance to write.
Beir bua agas beannacht
John O'Dowd
H-Block 3

S.H.A.R.P.

Dear Red Action,
Could you send me 250 "Beating the Fascists" stickers. The BNP recently made the front page of the local Evening Post in Berks.
I saw the Open Space - Fighting Talk and Panorama BBC programmes about the BNP. I myself support SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) and am a fan of the Redskins.
I remember seeing the Angelic Upstarts/The Blaggers play the Robey for CSB/AFA - a great night.
Yours ,
T.T.
Berkshire.

ELITISM

Dear Red Action, =
I was in England recently and saw your paper at a bookstore. Since there's no phone number in the paper, I didn't have time to contact you. I have been part of the socialist movement since 1953 - a large part of it in the Trotskyist groupings. I no longer consider myself a Trotskyist because I believe we have to build something superior to the Bolshevik Party rather than just to copy it like the Trotskyist's tend to do. I think the problem is elitism which pervades our culture and naturally affects the left as well.
I'm personally involved in the Latin America socialist movement which is less a mess than the US radicals who I'm afraid have done more harm that the CIA to socialism. I think we have to reaffirm a commitment to revolutionary democracy (not bourgeois democracy) and take away the concept from the bourgeoisie.
Fraternally,
Earl Gilman,
San Francisco,
California

GREAT STUFF!

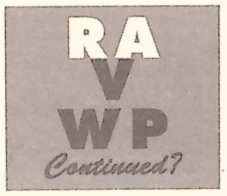
Dear Red Action,
I received all the stuff you sent me, thanks a lot for it. Of course, I haven't finished reading it yet but what I saw up to now is really good (I especially like the article in no. 62 on Trotsky's verdict on the Anti-Nazi League). It's great stuff really.
Another good thing is you publish letters. I Think that's a good way to exchange points of view.
Here in Belgium, anarchist-communists are not so many as in other European countries. It's a fuckin little country and the 'nazi cops' are really active to 'persecute' us, but as Che Guevara said, "The thing that matters is not victory or defeat, it's the continuity of the attack."
I'd like to ask you two things. 1) Is it possible for other people's articles to be published in Red Action and 2) you know that I'm in jail but is it possible for me to order a Red Action t-shirt by sending you an international postal order?
Not for fashion of course, but here we may wear personal t-shirts and I especially like to wear these kind because you see the screws faces - even if they don't understand the words they understand the picture.
Anyway, I hope to receive news from you as soon as possible.
Love and Rage/Anarchy/ Solidarity
Boris

Grateful..

Dear Red Action,
I got your letter and the newspapers and I've shown the papers in places in the Malmo-Lund area where militant anti-fascists get together.
The consequences of this is that I've made arrangements with one info shop in Lund, one cafe in Malmo and two youth communist groups in Lund and Landskrona. The arrangement is that I can put your newspaper in their places to be read.
The interest for the paper and AFA is very big. We think that we have much to learn from you about how to fight the fascists. But I think there is a problem with the paper - the language. I think the best way to spread the paper is to give free examples to the places I have mentioned above. I think it is difficult to sell the paper because of it being in English.
I hope you are able to send us free copies of your paper. The whole anti-fascist movement in this area would be very grateful to you if you could do this. But if you don't have the means to send us free copies we would understand that.
If it's possible we would be grateful for 12 copies. If you have some other free material you could send us, please do.
Thank you for your support and interest in our struggle against the fascists.
Yours sincerely,
M.M.
P.O. BOX 12050, S-245 02, Hjarup, Sweden

ANARCHIST OPPORTUNISM?

Dear Red Action,
Thank you for sending us your paper. We would like to sell it on a regular basis so please send us six copies of each issue from now on. Let us know how much to pay. One copy of all available back issues would be good too.
In your letter you ask about our politics. Bergen Bokkafe is a self-run book/record/comic/t-shirt store and don't have any political platform but we aim to help spread things that don't get into commercial stores at affordable prices. (That means we stock English language papers like Searchlight, Class War, An Phoblacht/Republican News etc).
The reason I wrote to you was because I've heard that RA members have done much of the work of putting AFA together which we support a lot. I was also curious about your own politics.
After reading your paper I must say I agree with most of what you stand for, especially your strong support of Irish republicanism. It's good to see a revolutionary English group with a clear view of the situation without the anti-republicanism of the trotskyites or the opportunism of the anarchists/class war.
There is one issue on which I don't agree with you though and that's your analysis of Leninism. I think it's important to see that there's a great difference between Trotsky and Lenin. Lenin was a true revolutionary who contributed to the struggle of the Russian working class, both practical and theoretical. Trotsky didn't.
Anyway, this isn't what's most important to discuss at the moment. Now all our efforts as revolutionaries must go towards building a revolutionary movement within the working class. I think we agree on that.
I hope this has answered your questions. Send us your paper and keep us informed.
In solidarity,
Baird Samdstad
Postboks 2725, Møhlenpris
N-5026 Bergen Norway



Dear Red Action,
As a lapsed member of the SWP who found it increasingly difficult to accept the lack of democracy within the organisation, I have read recent articles in Red Action with interest. In particular, the debate between yourselves and Workers Power regarding the role of the 'vanguard' party and its relation to the class spotlights a number of the concerns I felt while in the SWP. The standard response to any questions about democracy within the party was always in terms of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. It is refreshing to read arguments that are based on what Marx himself wrote. The left in this country always seems to prefer quotes from Lenin or Trotsky rather than from Marx or Engels.
I have bought some recent editions of the Workers Power paper whenever I see it but I haven't seen any response to your article in Red Action on the Paris Commune. I have not seen the material you used from Marx on the democracy of the commune in any other publication on the left, which surprises me since it is obviously central to any discussion of his politics. Can you tell me if the debate between Workers Power and Red Action is going to continue, since I believe the issues it raises are of fundamental importance to the future of the Marxist left.
PH
London

RA Reply
Red Action would be very happy to continue the debate to its conclusion. The story so far is that the Workers Power organisation published an article on Red Action accusing us of rejecting the concept of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. We replied in a letter to their paper which was published (in part) alongside a further article attacking Red Action and referring to what purported to be Marx's position on the Paris Commune. Red Action's response to this second attack was carried in RA no. 63. We pointed out fundamental historical and political inaccuracies in the Workers Power account of Marx's position in relation to the Commune and proletarian democracy in general - blunders of such an elementary nature that made it difficult to accept Workers Power as in any sense a 'Marxist' organisation. Despite the severity of the criticisms made in RA's reply, Workers Power have chosen to keep their heads below the parapet, apparently in an attempt to airbrush the entire embarrassing episode out of existence. As they have seen fit to make no reply, we ask readers of Red Action, as well as rank and file members of Workers Power, to draw their own conclusions. It is what Sherlock Holmes once called the curious case of the dog that didn't bark.

SOLIDARITY

Dear Red Action
You may have heard about Rostock (East Germany) and the racist/fascist mob burning down homes for asylum seekers and refugees.
In these days withfascism so big in Germany and the whole of Europe, it's ever so important for us to get help from comrades of other countries! That would be in our case Red Action delegates participating in our demo and cultural events, possibly holding a short speech on the demo.
Yours, Autonome Antifa,
Göttingen

UDR FOUR

Dear Red Action
Trial by jury and the right to silence, whether during police questioning or at trial, are salient components which form a fundamental principle of law that an accused person is innocent until proven, by due process under the rule of law, to be guilty. In the North of Ireland we do not have trial by jury, we have politically appointed, case-hardened judges who alone act as tribunal of fact and law in what is known as Diplock Courts. Suspects do not have the right to remain silent, in fact should a suspect remain silent under police questioning or/and during trial then this in itself is sufficient to obtain a conviction under the Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1988. In effect this means the burden of proof has been shifted from the prosecution to the defence and totally undermines the presumption of innocence. Moreover, as it now stands the loosely interpreted legislation of the 'Emergency Provisions Act' (EPA) which give police and the courts wide-ranging powers, now demand an accused to not just prove their innocence beyond reasonable doubt but, as I will later seek to establish, beyond a shadow of a doubt.
During detention, suspects are questioned for periods of 12-14 hours a day. Interviews are not audio or visually recorded and legal representatives are not permitted to attend police interviews of their client. This practice has inevitably led to much contention during the course of subsequent trials in which an accused has argued that alleged uncorroborated verbal and written admissions were fabricated by interviewing police officers. Police interviewers however deny any such suggestions by the accused that they have in fact fabricated evidence and as the accused has no independent witnesses to back up these assertions - how could they, given the draconian rules of detention under the EPA? - the trial judge will then convict on the basis of that uncorroborated statement. Lord Chief Justice Brian Hutton said, "That it is the duty of the courts to act so as not to defeat the will of parliament".
Prior to the mid 1980's save that interviewing police officers admit brutality or the fabrication of interview notes - they never have - it was impossible to refute their evidence and so some 80-90% of all Diplock court convictions were obtained on uncorraborated evidence alone. The emergence of a new scientific process known as ESDA gave hope to many accused awaiting trial who viewed it as legally accepted independant evidence which would establish that interview notes had been fabricated and this in turn would give them an acquittal.
The case of the UDR 4 was refered back to the Court of *Appeal under new evidence as* a result of ESDA their case had been backed by prominent politicians such as Ian Paisley and was therefore the focus of much media and public attention. The original trial of the four it was the prosecutions contention that all four were party to the killling of Armagh man Adrian Carrol. The case for the prosecution rested on the basis of uncorroborated verbal and written admissions (there was additional eye witness evidence in the case of Neil Latimer).
All four made allegations of police brutality and stated that interview notes had been fabricated and statements signed by them were dictated by interviewing police officers. The trial judge rejected these claims as "lies and nonsense" and sentenced each to life imprisionment. When their case was referred back to the Court of Appeal the judges there ruled that ESDA showed conclusive proof that notes made by the police were re-written and that false authentications were appended to the notes by senior police officers. ESDA tests also make it clear that senior police officers lied at the trial because they said that none of the interview notes had been re-written. In light of these revelations, the three convicted on the basis of uncorroborated statements had their appeals allowed and were freed whilst that of the fourth accused, Latimer, was denied, Given that it was initiallly the prosecutions' case that all four acted in concert it will seem strange to many that, in spite of corroborating evidnce against Neil Latimer, the Appeal Court allowed three of the appeals against convictions while denying the fourth, Many will be persuaded that his conviction had not been proven beyond reasonable doubt but then again, he had not proved his innocence beyond a shadow of a doubt as required of him.
Andy Gallagher
Long Kesh

ANARCHY IN THE U.K.

In words that will be written on his political tombstone, John Major declared that:

"The soft option, the devaluer's option, the inflationary option, would be a betrayal of our future."

Ten days later, his government devalued, In July, Chancellor Lamont made a keynote speech in which he said:

"It is patently absurd to suggest that devaluation would allow interest rate cuts...a realignment could only put interest rates up, not down."

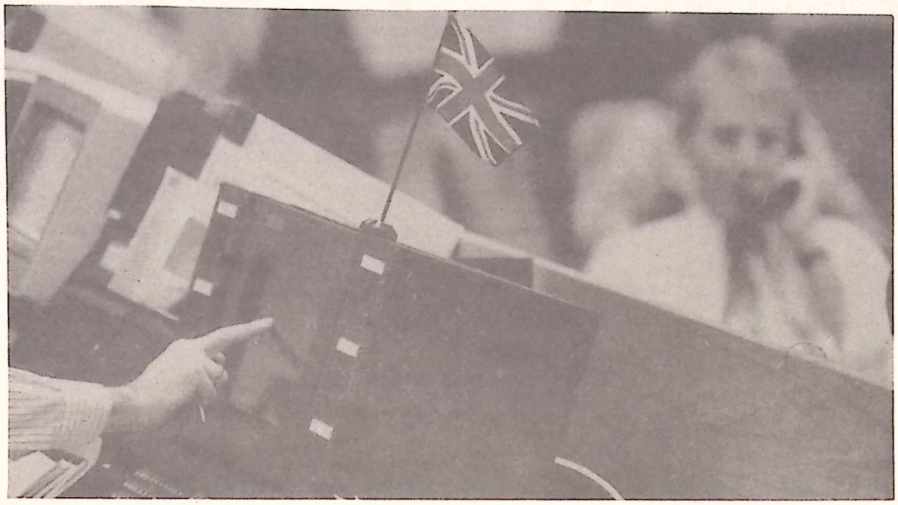
As it happens, before he 'realigned', Lamont put interest rates up.After he devalued, he lowered interest rates. Obviously the Treasury 'omens' in this case (a raven perched on the Bank of England? - but sterling!) were a little askew. The boffins would get a more coherent economic policy if they threw away their computer forecasts, and consulted the entrails of a sheep.

Those pathetic little union jacks stuck on the top of the money market computers hung limply by while their operators ripped off the rest of us. Waving the flag is their way of saying 'screw you'. One currency trader told an interviewer,

"We've had an excellent day. We've made a lot of money."

What is a 'lot of money' for a day's work in financial circles nowadays? The artless interviewer prompted, "two hundred thousand grand?". The trader replied, "Nah, ten million."

That's not ten million from other traders, the "brood of gamblers" as Marx called them, in the exchange markets casino, but directly from the government, in other words from taxes. The same taxes which cannot afford to keep hospitals open, or provide decent schools, or homes for people living on the streets. The total of the money lost in this way is naturally a secret known only to the government boffins who lost it, but it cannot have been less than £2 billion and was almost certainly far more. There are press reports of the clearing banks alone having made £2 million from the pound's fall, and a single individual, Hungarian banker George Soros, claims to have made £1 billion for himself. That's £50 from the pocket of every taxpayer in Britain stuffed into the pocket of lucky Mr Soros.



Those pathetic little union jacks stuck on the top of the money market computers hung limply by while their operators ripped off the rest of us. Waving the flag is their way of saying 'screw you'.

There is a deeper puzzle than the mere fact of a Tory government making a present of a few billion pounds to the rich. If there's one thing you can depend on in life, it's that the Tories claim to support what they are endlessly pleased to call the 'free market'. It's the lynchpin of their political and economic philosophy. It is said to be the foundation of personal liberties and prosperity. Yet in defending the ERM, a Tory government is to be seen fighting boot and fist against what is cracked up to be one of the free market's purest forms. At the same time, unregenerate Thatcherites rejoice in the defeat of the ERM, as if it wasn't Thatcher who took Britain into the ERM in the first place. It is the 'unseen hand' of the market, the Thatcherites now say, that must be allowed to guide the economy.

By the 'unseen hand' the marketeers don't mean the many 'unseen hands' dipping their fingers into the exchange market's gravy. They mean the way in which unfettered self-interest within a free market is supposed, following the teaching of the early bourgeois economist Adam Smith, to act in the interests of all. It may not seem very likely to you or me that speculators making £10 million for a day's work are actually working for our benefit, but that's the theory. To the onlooker, it simply appears that the successful speculators are those who guess the direction of a herd of sheep a fraction of a second before the sheep begin to move. When the sheep are the present government, it's a one way bet.

According to the unseen hand theory, the state can only distort and obstruct capitalism. But look at how the most exalted representative of free market capitalism in the world today, Ross Perot, made his money. He offered a computerised system to the US Medicare programme. Every time a poor or elderly person in America went to the doctor, the US government gave Perot a dollar. His $3 billion fortune is taxpayers' money given to him by the state! Weird. The huge motor and aerospace industries of the US - the archetypal forms of capitalist industry in the post-war era - only exist because of direct or disguised state funding in roads, airports or defence.

What then, is the real function of the state in advanced capitalism? The answer lies in what is hidden from view within the analysis of bourgeois ideologists - the social relationships that uphold the capitalist free market. These relationships are most obvious in the money markets favoured by the speculators since money flows here are not bound up with the business of anything except making more money. It is impossible to pretend that the speculators are 'doing a job'. By far the larger proportion of the money that sloshes around the global financial system, around 95%, is totally unconnected with the process of production. It is moved around in a self-perpetuating system of speculation: to buy at one price solely in order to buy back at an advantageous price at a later date. When the speculators make a profit in this way, they have not conjured the money from thin air: it must come from the pockets of those who work in the factories and on the building sites producing the commodities that really constitute a society's wealth.

In the last resort, it is only the 'armed bodies of men' at the disposal of the state that makes the robbery of the many by the few on this gigantic scale possible. Looking beyond the ideology, we can see that the term 'free market' depends on mechanisms of coercion, not their absence. The free market ideologists seek to present the idea that capitalist markets are 'natural' expressions of economic activity that emerge spontaneously as a result of freedom from state coercion. According to this idea, market activity is like the weather - it just happens, and only gets muddled up by being interfered with. Yet this is the very opposite of the truth.

It is the state that decides, for instance, whether speculators are free to move vast amounts of money around as the whim takes them, or not, because it is the state that constructs a system that enables them to do so, or not. The Thatcherite deregulation debauch of the eighties that has brought the present catastrophe in its train, is a prime example of government policy, regulated and legislated for at every turn - not a freewheeling bunch of individuals doing their own thing.

The whole conception of the freedom of a market is fundamentally misleading. This is because freedom in the social arena can ultimately only refer to the freedom of a particular social group or class, that is, to people. As Engels wrote:

"economics is not concerned with things but with relations between people and in the last instance between classes."

Capitalist ideology ascribes freedom to a thing, the market mechanism, and make this the criterion of the legitimacy of a social system. The freedom of a 'thing' is falsely represented as the freedom of the person. Yet mere common sense insists that it is people or classes who alone can truly be said to be free or not. In the real world, the freedom of the market disguises the freedom of the capitalist to exploit. The exploitation of working people and the coercion, the absence of freedom, that it entails, whether in the form of redundancies, wage cuts or price rises, is hidden by the screen of impersonal 'market forces'.

The housing market is a good example of market 'logic'. Due to the running down of existing council house stock and the prohibition of new council building, people in recent years have found themselves compelled to buy their own homes. This means taking out a loan from a deregulated financial institution at a breathtaking rate of interest - the alternative being living with your mum and dad until you're fifty. Those who monopolise money - the financial institutions such a building societies - throw more and more money at a relatively fixed housing stock fought over by increasingly desperate people, with the inevitable result that prices soar and profits boom. Banks and Building Societies rake in the money until the bubble bursts. Millions of house owners are then left with the prospect of regularly paying out huge sums of money for depreciating assets or becoming homeless. The housing market is 'free' - the people caught in it are trapped.

Another example of capitalist rationality is provided by the current energy fiasco. In creating a privatised 'free market' in the coal industry, the Tories manipulate subsidies in the direction of pits suitable for privatisation to make them 'attractive' to investors. They then dole out £1.3 billion to the nuclear industry and then claim that the established coal industry is 'uncompetitive'. A similar subsidy for coal would allow the industry to pay people to burn it. The Tories privatised the main customer for coal in the form of two giant monopolies, National Power and Powergen, and force the electricity companies to buy power from the state-run nuclear industry for which the consumer pays an 11% levy on every electricity bill. The ten distribution companies, each with its regional monopoly, are permitted to set up their own gas-fired generating plants from which they can then buy electricity from themselves at whatever price they want to charge. The excess costs are once again passed onto the consumer who has no choice in the matter but to pay whatever price is in the shareholders' best interests.

As part of the essential background to this policy, the Tories pushed through laws binding the workers" trade unions hand and foot. A centralised, paramilitary police force is funded and equipped. When workers nonetheless fight back, as during the 84-85 Miners' Strike, the police are sent out to batter striking miners in scenes reminiscent of a medieval battlefield. The end result is that most of the people who actually do the work lose their jobs, their homes, and their communities. To ensure that coal was free to move around the country, striking miners were told that they were not. To ensure that the market for coal was free, hundreds were imprisoned in mass arrests.

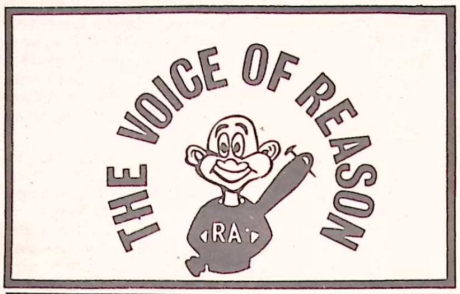
To call the result 'free market' after witnessing the quantity and quality of the coercion and manipulation required to create it is a travesty of common sense. The forcible repression and expropriation of those who do the work is the first condition of the 'free market' - a process which is constantly being enforced, extended and sustained. It is the exploitive and antagonistic social relationships between those who own the wealth and those who created it, between those who do the hard work and those who take the profit that defines the real nature of capitalist societies.

This does not mean that the interests of the capitalist class are themselves harmonious. The truth is that the interests of the speculative classes are antagonistic to the interests even of other sections of capitalism, i.e. those engaged in appropriating profits in manufacturing industry. The significance of the recent ERM crisis is that the financial monopolists in the money markets have succeeded in reasserting their control against other capitalist forces seeking "stability'. All policies will now be 'market friendly', public investment will be strongly discouraged as prejudicial to the interests of the speculating classes. Public sector expenditure, in particular public sector wages, will be cut to the bone.

This in no way represents the advocates of investment and strong industrial profits as the good guys. They represent no more than a rival pack of dogs fighting over the same bone: the bone they are fighting for consists of the finite profit extracted by the exploitation of the working people who produce more value (and so profit) than they get back in wages. When Thatcher abolished exchange controls and deregulated the financial markets, she created a system, a Frankenstein as it turned out, that permitted huge profits to be made by a certain section of the capitalist class. This class consisted principally of clearing banks, financial institutions and City traders. So not only are those who work and those who take the profits locked into antagonistic relationships, but those who cream off the profits fight amongst themselves. The anarchy of production is twofold. At its root is the division of society into those who own the factories, land, machines etc., and those who own nothing but their capacity to work for the profit of others.

*This is the reason for the desperate and contradictory interventions by the government in what they tell us is a self-harmonising optimisation of productive potential through the fabled 'market'. The contradictory forces combined in the existence of the capitalist markets produce a system that is characterised not by 'harmony',but, as Marx suggests, by anarchy. The money markets themselves brilliantly exemplify this anarchy in action - as everyone who has witnessed the pin strip suits on the exchanges having the screaming ab dabs will have seen for themselves.

This underlying economic anarchy is then reproduced in the sphere of the politics of the capitalist state as incoherent, discontinuous and self-contradictory 'policies'. Adam Smith's 'unseen hand' turns out to have been holding a cosh. Once again, we've all been mugged. Rammed up shit creek by their own friends, the Tories will retreat to the security of pure class instinct and do what they do best - attack the working class. Their only remaining 'policy' is that the workers, including the huge numbers without jobs, must pay. Forget the ERMs, ECCs, ECUs and EMUs; attacks on wages and benefits is the only economic 'science' the Tories know. This anarchy, the social tensions and chaos inseparable from the exploitation of the working majority, can only be ended through the abolition of exploitation itself.



CRANHILL'S AUDIENCE WITH THE KING

The King Returns! Sheridan posing in civvies outside Saughton Prison

Militant's election bandwagon rolled into the east end of Glasgow recently, only to be shown a rapid exit by the local community. Leaflets were distributed announcing that there would be open-air meetings *against water privatisation. The fact there is a by-election* and that Scottish Militant Labour are standing obviously had nothing to do with it.! The main attraction was to be Tommy "I'll name the names" Sheridan. The local bears had other ideas.

People living in the damp-ridden maisonettes hung placards on the verandas saying, "Militant Out" and "We've Been Sold Down The River"! These were clear references to their local "Militant" councillor, Chic Stevenson, who after eight years on the city council is yet to make his mark for the people of Cranhill. Whilst King Tommy's army is a new phenomenon in some areas of Glasgow, in Cranhill they've had the "revolution" for eight years. Only rhetoric distinguishes the Militant careerists from the Labour Party careerists.

A convoy of a car (carrying the emperor), a van (the army!), and a yuppy jeep (the other dignitaries) was greeted by a 100-strong hostile crowd. As Sheridan emerged from the car, to his obvious shock he was pelted with eggs and potatoes. They don't do this in Pollock! A squeal of tyres, a screech of brakes and the yuppy jeep was off, never to be seen again!

The crowd was chanting, "Charlie Out!", a reference to their local "Bolshevik" councillor. Tommy Sheridan then attempted to address his public on water privatisation but before he could continue a local man intervened: "What about prisoners' rights, Tommy? You've been in the jail for anti-poll tax activities and all you did was harm to the prisoners' cause! Why did you insist on wearing prison uniform in the Training For Freedom hostel in Saughton Jail? That undermines the right to wear their own gear in the TFF. What about the guys in Barlinnie right now and their conditions? What has Militant said about that since you got released?"

Sheridan could only hang his head in shame, insisting that he was "only" here to talk about water"! By this time the whole crowd was shouting at him. Tommy got his right to free speech and was allowed to speak for five minutes on the "fat cats who will make a profit out of water privatisation". Meanwhile, the kids covered his car in Gardyloo stickers (the local campaign against privatisation). After an extremely boring five minutes, the locals had had enough and told him to fuck off! As his entourage left the area, they were again pelted with eggs, potatoes, cans and bricks. "I almost took his head off with a golf ball!" said one participant.

So what is all this about? Is this evidence of a fascist mob out to beat the left? Not quite. It points to a growing resentment in working class communities against opportunists and carpetbaggers. Areas like Cranhill have been used and abused by Labour and their lefty followers for years. The result of the anti-Militant protest is that the locals are standing their own candidate on a Gardyloo - Stop Water Theft ticket.

Armed with this mandate, the candidate adopted by this anti-Militant constituency immediately set up his campaign HQ in the local pub. From there, he run a brilliantly unconventional but fatally flawed campaign. Few would argue that those individuals with whom he came into personal contact, were quickly won over by both his charm and the logic of his political platform. Tragically, during the entire two weeks the section of the electorate so canvassed was restricted by the strategy of the campaign to the residents of the public bar!

On the night of the count, a loyal and near-tearful supporter broke the news to the still-optimistic candidate who had quietly been celebrating his victory in advance - **"THIRTY FIVE VOTES"** he thundered, **"THAT'S THE LAST TIME I'LL DO ANYTHING FOR THOSE BASTARDS!"**

And so Militant's election bandwagon rolled on...

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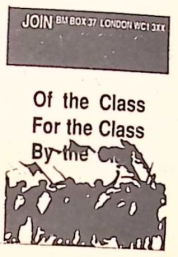

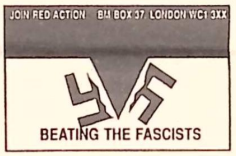

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BATTLE FOR WATERLOO

between 800 and 1,000 anti-fascists on the staion concourse. Scuffles broke out; peaked and subsided all over the station. First with the fascists then with the police. The latter who had confidently predicted they "would keep the factions apart," began themselves to resemble nothing more than a supplementary faction!

"Mad Enough"

An overheard converstaion between a group of excited youngsters conveys the flavour of the day: "This is brilliant! Who organised it?"..."I think it's AFA but it's mad enough to have been organised by Red Action"!

The police had clearly lost control. Shortly after 5pm, 25 minutes before the fascists had been invited by the organisers to assemble, Waterloo was shut down at the request of the station manager. If the Battle For Waterloo had been won, the battle for the streets was just beginning.

Freed from any inhibitions the existence of security cameras on the station may have had on their behaviour, large mobs of anti-fascists rampaged gleefully through the side streets, blending and splintering as the situation demanded. A 50-strong group of mainly right-wing casuals were trapped beneath a foot-bridge. Surrounded by dozens of police, they were forced to face-down a full-frontal assault - but only just. As bricks and bottles rained down on them from the advancing attackers, some fascists at the back tried to make a break for it. A copper screamed,"If you run, we're fucking running with you"!

On the perimeters of the station, individuals and smaller groups of fascists,some on foot, some mobile, were picked off expeditiously. By this time, four other stations in the immediate vicinity, inlcuding Charing Cross, had been "closed due to riots".

Chaos

A large number of boneheads arrived on foot via the foot-bridge and swelled the fascists' numbers to 150. By this time all was chaos. Football fans from Arsenal, QPR, Chelsea and Milwall, many wearing team colours, supplemented one side or the other according to their political convictions.

Red Action supporters infiltrated the opposition, mingled cheerfully and 'sieg-heiled" with gusto! Skirmishes were frequent, bottles and bricks were lobbed into the fascist/police crowd with customary disregard. The police were visibly perturbed. They wanted desperately to be rid of their "escorts" but the stations were all closed and the fascists themselves had no idea where the venue was. It transpired that the actual organisers had prudently arranged an alternative redirection point for themselves, well protected by a mobilisation of similar numbers.

Furious phone calls were now being made by the entrapped fascists demanding either they be "rescued" or be entrusted with the details of the venue. Both requests were repeatedly denied, the standard reply was:"Rather than us come to Waterloo, you should come to Victoria"! With the stations closed, the only option was to cross the river. However, rather than bring them over the bridge, the police tried to "smuggle" them out via the arches at the rear of the south bank complex, down Concert Hall approach.

This particular retreat from Waterloo was cut off by the arrival of 400 anti-fascists at the junction of Belvedere Road. First the police/fascists stopped dead and simply stared as the anti-fascists slowly advanced in almost complete silence. Then a bit of pavement slab flew through the air and a skip was plundered. Both sides freely exchanged missiles. Suddenly a black youth, one of the security stewards, appeared from a tunnel, under the railway bridge, adjacent to where the opposition had grouped, and without a moment's hesitation began trading blows with those nearest to him. They were appalled.

Seizing the moment, the anti-fascists charged. It looked like a complete rout as fascists and police fled in all directions. However, a couple of coppers armed with batons and shields kept their nerve, rallied the others and the anti-fascist offensive was blunted.

It was apparantly during these exchanges that one of the chaps from the Millwall firm, Taggert or "Tags", collapsed with a heart attack! Meanwhile, his still able-bodied colleauges had come to an indecisive halt at the base of Waterloo Bridge. Riot police formed a protective barrier. After five minutes, and without any warning, they suddenly vanished. In panic, the "fash" bolted down the ramp that runs parallell to Waterloo Bridge. Halfway down, they shuddered to a halt and then reversed at speed when they met 300 "Reds" on the way up!

Bemused and crestfallen fascists retreat with riot police from the scene.

Exploding back onto the pavement, they ran into scattered groups of anti-fascists who had optimistically given chase when they fled and now found themselves outnumbered by 10 to one. For a moment the tables had turned.

Curiously, it was this piece of footage - the only one where the right-wingers were briefly in the ascendancy - that someone in the BBC selected as the most suitable visible metaphor to describe the events of the day. Can't have 'Reds" winning - it might alienate the middle classes?

By the time the right-wingers were herded onto Waterloo Bridge, stopping both lanes of traffic, hundreds of anti-fascists in groups of 50 and 60 had also been corralled by police beneath it. The abiding memory of the day, one that summed up police befuddlement throughout, was the sight of 50 police with batons and shields jogging up the hill in indian file, evidently oblivious or by now possibly indifferent to similar numbers of "anarchos" and "Reds" filing past them conspicuously in hot pursuit of further prey.

Eventually, under cover of darkness the police escorted the crestfallen to Temple tube where a train was comandeered. About 400 made it to a venue in Eltham, SE London, though significantly, not wishing to lick their wounds in public, the press were excluded.

Waterloo represented an attempt by Britain's far-right in the shape of Blood and Honour to emerge from their twilight world as their counter-parts have successfully done elsewhere and go public. Once having made themselves more accessible, it would once again be realistic to consider going commercial. By plugging the gig and exploiting the seemingly endless fascination among sections of the media with the far-right, potential backers could assess the real pulling power of Screwdriver and , equally important, evaluate the pulling power of the far-left.

The following Monday, a Blood and Honour organiser, clearly frustrated, grumbled to the Guardian:"The communists organise concerts all the time and are left alone. We organise a concert and the Jews, the left-wing and the Government try to stop it - so much for democracy ... We will carry on regardless". That is self-evident.

Only four days later, the BNP acquired 20 per cent of the vote in a by-election on the Isle of Dogs. The ratchet jumped another notch.

Unpalatable though it may be for the moderate Trotskyite-left, it is only the forces grouped around AFA that currently stand between the far-right and whatever goals they may have set for themselves.